A STREET & SMITH MAGAZINE

LOVE STORY

EVERY WEEK MAGAZINE FEB. 28, 1931

ILLUSTRATED 15 cents 20¢ IN CANADA

EXILED!

By

Eric Powers

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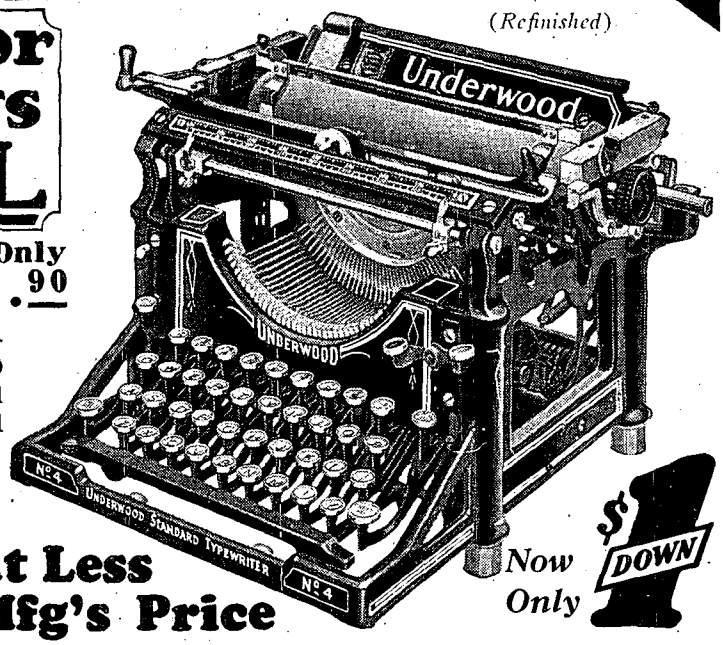

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Vol. LXXIX EVERY WEEK Number 3

LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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Beginning in next week's issue—"One-man Girl," by Maysie Greig.
A new serial of love and the modern girl.

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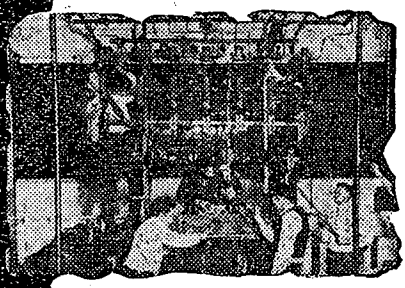

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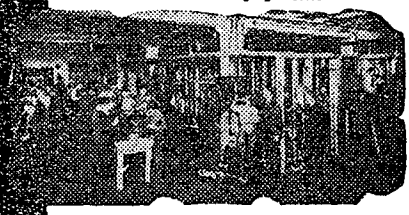

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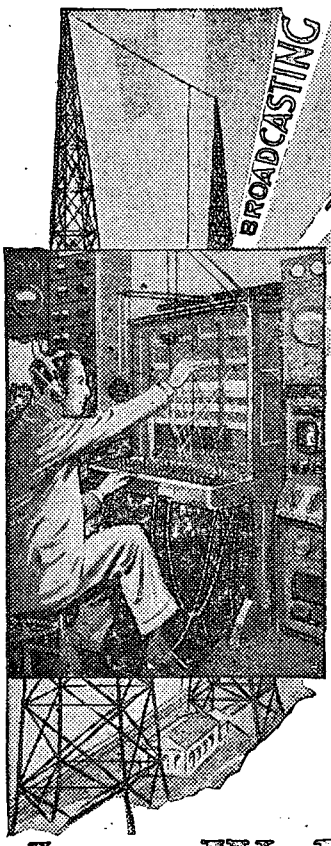

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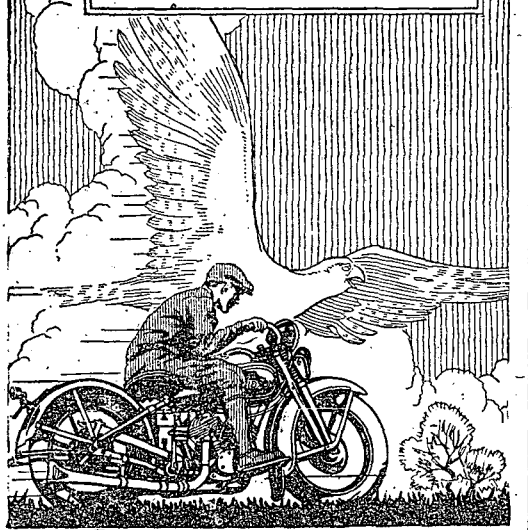

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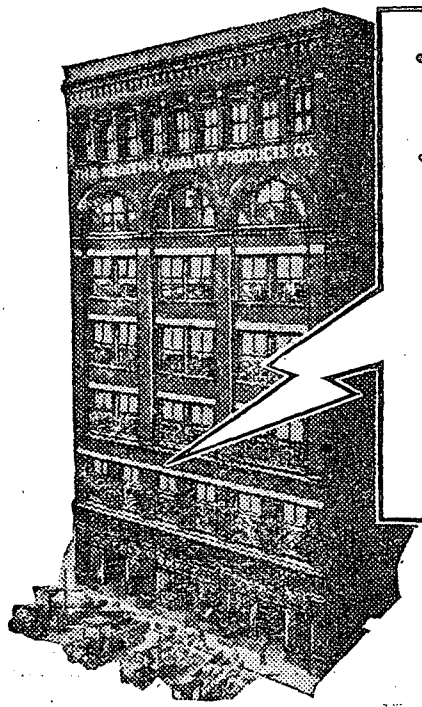

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Quick Acting Double Test

If you suffer from these conditions, you likely will be delightfully surprised at the quick, soothing, beneficial action of Cystex.

Much of the marked success of Cystex is due to its being two treatments in one. Because of this double action most sufferers find that there is no long waiting for results but that their conditions are alleviated almost immediately. One part of the treatment starts circulating thru the system within a few minutes, quickly alleviating urinary irritation and associated painful conditions. The other part of the treatment soon acts as a mild and soothing diuretic to the kidneys.

The ten pure ingredients composing the Cystex double treatment are listed in each package so that you may know exactly what you are taking, and can be told by your druggist or doctor that this is a highly meritorious preparation which does not contain any dopes, narcotics or habit-forming drugs.

Internationally Successful

Cystex has had such marked success that it is now demanded in many different parts of the world, and is registered with the governments of twenty different countries, such as England, France, Canada, Australia, Brazil, etc. This rapidly growing demand is largely due to quick action, unusual merit, and the recommendation of satisfied users who found that Cystex quickly alleviated their conditions thus eliminating many hours' suffering and worry.

Guaranteed Trial Offer

Don't Wait. Don't delay. Get Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) from any druggist for only 60c under the Iron-Clad, Money-Back Guarantee. Put it to the test. Use all of it. See for yourself how fast it works. If it does not quickly improve restful sleep and alleviate other discouraging conditions, due to functional bladder irritation, thus increasing your energy and enjoyment of life, merely return the empty package and your money will be refunded.

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Win a Buick Sedan

or $2,900.00 in Cash

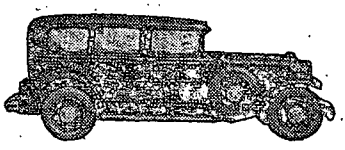
SOMEONE who answers this ad will receive, absolutely free, a fully equipped 7-passenger Buick Sedan or its full value in cash ($2,000.00) and $900.00 in cash for promptness. We are also giving away 6 Ford Sedans, an Eastman Home Moving Picture Outfit, a Shetland Pony, a Radio, Gold Watches, Silverware and many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash to people who solve our puzzle and win our prizes. Already we have given away more than $200,000.00 in cash and prizes to advertise our business. Miss Jewell Casey won $3,720.00, Mr. I. Nystrom won $3,375.00, Miss Anna Linke won $2,320.00, Mr. M. D. Reidman won $3,920.00, Mrs. Robt. Ellington won $1,750.00 and Mr. E. N. Garrett won $2,320.00. More than $7,500.00 in prizes will be awarded in this offer, which is guaranteed by an old reliable company with a reputation of many years of honest dealings and is open to anyone living in the United States outside of Chicago.

Solve This Puzzle

There are a number of soldiers hidden in the trees and bushes in the picture above. Only their helmets and faces are visible. See if you can find them. When you find 5, draw a circle around each one, fill in your name and address on the coupon below and send picture and coupon to me right away.

$900.00 Cash Given for Promptness

In addition to the 7-passenger Buick Sedan, 6 Ford Sedans and the many other valuable prizes—besides Hundreds of Dollars in Cash—I am also going to give an extra added Cash Prize of $900.00 for Promptness to the winner of the Buick Sedan, making a total of $2,900.00 you may win. In case of ties duplicate prizes will be awarded, and any winner may have cash instead of the prize won if so preferred. Get busy right away. Solve the puzzle, fill in the coupon below and send it to me just as soon as possible to qualify for an opportunity to share in the $7,500.00 total grand prizes. EVERYBODY PROFITS. Who knows but that you may be the Lucky First Prize Winner? It pays to act promptly.



Mail Today

Robert Harrison, Mgr., Dept. B-511
315 S. Peoria Street, Chicago, Ill.

I have solved the puzzle and am anxious to win a prize.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

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NO MORE BIG TIRE BILLS!

GOODYEAR FISK Firestone U.S. AND OTHER TIRES

At ¼ Regular Prices

Tires You Know and Prefer AT NEW LOW PRICES!

You can rely upon Chicago's oldest and most reliable rubber company to deliver tire mileage at lowest cost. Actual tests on the worst roads in the country prove that our standard brand, reconstructed tires deliver 50 to 60 per cent more service. A trial order will convince you.

BUY NOW — 12 MONTHS SERVICE GUARANTEED — SAVE MONEY

BALLOON Tires

Size Rim	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21"	$2.30	$1.10
29x4.50-20"	2.40	1.15
30x4.50-21"	2.45	1.20
28x4.75-19"	2.48	1.20
30x4.95-21"	2.90	1.35
30x5.00-20"	2.95	1.35
28x5.25-18"	2.95	1.35
30x5.25-20"	2.95	1.35
31x5.25-21"	3.20	1.35
30x5.77-20"	3.20	1.40
31x6.00-19"	3.20	1.40
32x6.00-20"	3.20	1.40
33x6.00-21"	3.20	1.45
32x6.20-20"	3.65	1.75

Reg. CORD Tires

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x3	$2.20	$1.00
30x3½	2.25	1.00
32x3½	2.70	1.15
31x4	2.95	1.15
32x4	2.95	1.15
33x4	2.95	1.15
34x4	3.50	1.15
32x4½	3.20	1.45
33x4½	3.20	1.45
34x4½	3.45	1.45
30x5	3.60	1.[illegible]
33x5	3.60	1
35x5	4.45	1.[illegible]

All Other Sizes

DEALERS WANTED

All Tubes New—Guaranteed First Quality

Send only $1.00 deposit with each tire ordered; balance C. O. D. If you send cash in full deduct 5 per cent. You are guaranteed a year's service or replacement at half price.

MIDLAND TIRE & RUBBER COMPANY

Dept. 17-E 1000-10 W. Sixty-Third Street Chicago

CORRECT Your NOSE!

Improve your appearance with the Anita Nose Adjuster. Shapes flesh and cartilage—quickly, safely and painlessly, while you sleep or work. Results are lasting. Doctors praise it. 87,000 users. Write for 30-Day TRIAL OFFER and FREE BOOKLET.

ANITA INSTITUTE, B-54 Anita Bldg., Newark, N. J.

Bound volumes of PICTURE PLAY MAGAZINE now ready. Price $3.00 per volume. Address Subscription Department, Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

LADIES

I positively guarantee my great successful "Relief Compound." Safely relieves some of the longest, stubborn and unusual cases in three to five days.

FOR OVER A QUARTER OF A CENTURY women from all over the country have used this compound with remarkable results. Testimonials without number. No harm, pain or interference with work. Mail $2. Double strength, $3. Booklet Free. Write today.

DR. D. P. SOUTHINGTON REMEDY CO., KANSAS CITY, MO.

PICTURE PLAY

The Best Magazine of the Screen

Intimate without prying, admiring without gushing, critical without slandering—the HONEST magazine.

Price, 25 cents per copy

On Sale At All News Stands

Win $2,500 Or Buick Sedan and $1,000

You can share in great advertising campaign. Over $5,000.00 in 140 Prizes. Also thousands of dollars in special rewards. C. H. Essig, a farmer, Argos, Ind. won $3,500; Mrs. Edna Zller of Kentucky, won $1,950; and scores of others. Now better than ever. This is your opportunity. In our new campaign someone wins $2,500—why not you? Enter now—

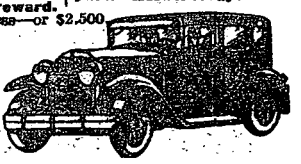
CAN YOU FIND 5 FACES?

Strange faces are in tree, clouds etc. Some are upside down, others look straight at you. If you find 5 or more faces, mark them, clip the picture and mail. If you answer now, and take an active part, you are sure to get a special cash reward. You may win Buick Sedan, and $1,000 for promptness—or $2,500 if you prefer all cash. Mail answer today.

$1,000 Extra for Promptness

If you are prompt I'll give $1,000 extra if you win first prize. Answer today!

Send Today Someone answering wins Buick Sedan delivered by nearest dealer. Duplicate prizes in case of ties. No matter where you live, if you want to win $2,500 first prize money, send answer today for details. Can you find 5 or more faces? Send no money. Alan Grant, Mgr. 549 Washington Blvd., Dept. 45, Chicago.



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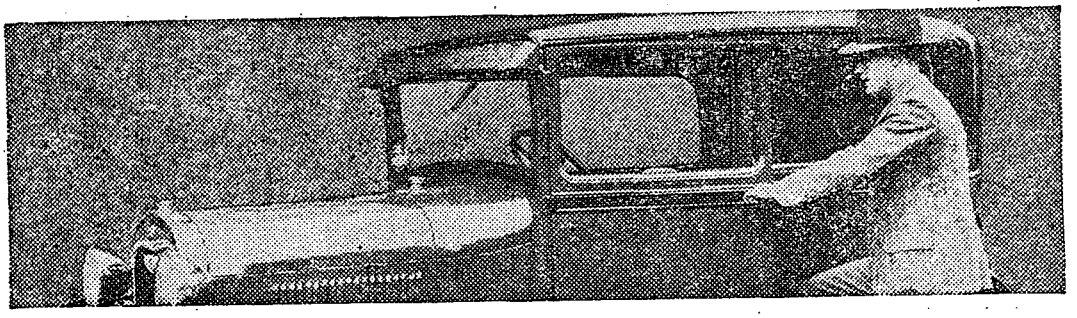

Imagine Making $100 in a Week!

21 Year-Old Wallace Marek Did it . . . Besides getting a New Ford Sedan and a $1500 Cash Prize . . . Get My Offer to You

What is the amazing money-making secret of this 21-year-old boy? How can a young fellow—without any special schooling or training—earn more money in a week than the average man makes in a month? I'll tell you. And I'll tell you how hundreds of other men and women—young and old—from every part of the country—have found a way out of financial troubles. What's more, I'll show you how *you*, too, can get started on the road to big money—in a new kind of pleasant short-hour work that *anyone—anywhere*—can do.

Start Making Big Money Now

Yes—if you long for fine, steady, congenial work that pays big money I want you to get started with me right away. I don't care who you are, or where you live or what kind of work you are doing now. I'll make you the very same offer I made to Marek who has often cleared $100 in a single week besides getting a Ford Car *free* and a $1500 cash prize, as *extra rewards.*

All you do is to carry out a few simple instructions I send you by mail, and help me handle my business in your locality. You'll be amazed at how simple and pleasant the whole thing is. If you can give me a little of your spare time—evenings or Saturday afternoons—you should be able to clear $2 to $3 in an hour. By devoting full time, you may find you are cut out for $80, $90 or $100 a week.

Hoppe Cleared $18 in One Day

If you are making less than $150 a month I know you will be interested in my offer. It brought H. L. Hoppe, a former factory worker, $18 in one day. Wm. E. Berkhimer, Pennsylvania, earns up to $90 a week. Mrs. Eva McCutchen (former $10-a-week office worker) reports $26.55 profit the first day. Mrs. Edgar Crouthamel, Pennsylvania, got $89.72 for one week's work. And Sol. Korenblit, New York, says he makes $110 a week regularly. Don't these remarkable earnings show the tremendous possibilities? Is there any reason why you can't do as well?

New Ford Sedan FREE

Besides a chance to make $10 to $20 a day I will also offer you a new Ford Tudor Sedan FREE as an extra reward or bonus—and I'll make you this offer the very day you join me. *This is not a contest.* I have given hundreds of Ford Cars away to my helpers.

Send No Money—Just Mail Coupon

But remember—this offer is limited to *one man or woman in each territory.* So if you are interested, let me hear from you at once. Write and tell me how much money you need—$10, $12, $15 a day, or whatever it may be. Or better still, just mail the coupon and start earning the money right away. Do this now before someone else gets in ahead of you.

MAIL THIS NOW

MAIL THIS NOW

Albert Mills, Employment Mgr.,
7343 Monmouth Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio.

Please send full information about the steady, profitable work now open in my locality. This information is free and does not obligate me in any way. I want to make $..... a day.

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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Test your Ability to DRAW

You may have artistic ability that when properly trained, would insure your success as a commercial artist. Send for our Art Ability Questionnaire which tests your natural sense of design, proportion, color, perspective, etc. Learn if your talent is worth developing. Your Questionnaire will be graded by Federal instructors, and you will be frankly told what your score is.

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This fascinating free test has been an eye opener to many Federal School students—girls as well as men—*who are making $2000, $4000, $5000 and $6000 yearly.* Learn at home in spare time. The Federal Course contains lessons by leading artists, gives you *personal criticism*, and leads rapidly to practical work. By all means get this free test—send *now for your Questionnaire.* State age and occupation.

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AGENTS! SELL SHIRTS

Bostonian

Start **without investment** in a profitable shirt business of your own. Take orders in your *district for nationally-known* Bostonian Shirts. **$1.25 commission** for you on sale of 3 shirts for $5.95—**Postage Paid.** $9 value, guaranteed fast colors. No experience needed. Complete selling equipment **FREE!**

GOOD PAY FOR HONEST WORKERS

Big earnings for ambitious workers. Genuine broadcloth in four fast colors. Write for money-making plan, free outfit, with actual cloth samples and everything needed to start. Name and address on postal will do. **Write TODAY! SURE!**

BOSTONIAN MFG. CO., DEPT. C-339 89 Bickford St., Boston, Mass.

Want a Steady Government Job?

$1900 to $2700 A YEAR

Many Government Jobs Open to Women

Mail Coupon Today Sure

Railway Postal Clerks

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE
Dept. W194, Rochester, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush to me without charge, (1) 32 page book describing Government jobs, (2) List of U. S. Government jobs now open to men and women 18 to 50. (Tell me how to get a position.)

Name .....

Address .....

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STREET & SMITH'S

Air Trails

Has Crashed into popularity. Stories of aviation, thrilling and true to life, written by famous airmen-authors.

Read

Double Eagle

By

GEORGE BRUCE

A complete, book-length novel in the March issue of AIR TRAILS.

One of the greatest war-air stories that GEORGE BRUCE has ever written.

Don't miss this big feature novel. A story you will never forget, in America's most popular air-fiction magazine.

ON THE NEWS STANDS THE SECOND FRIDAY IN FEBRUARY.

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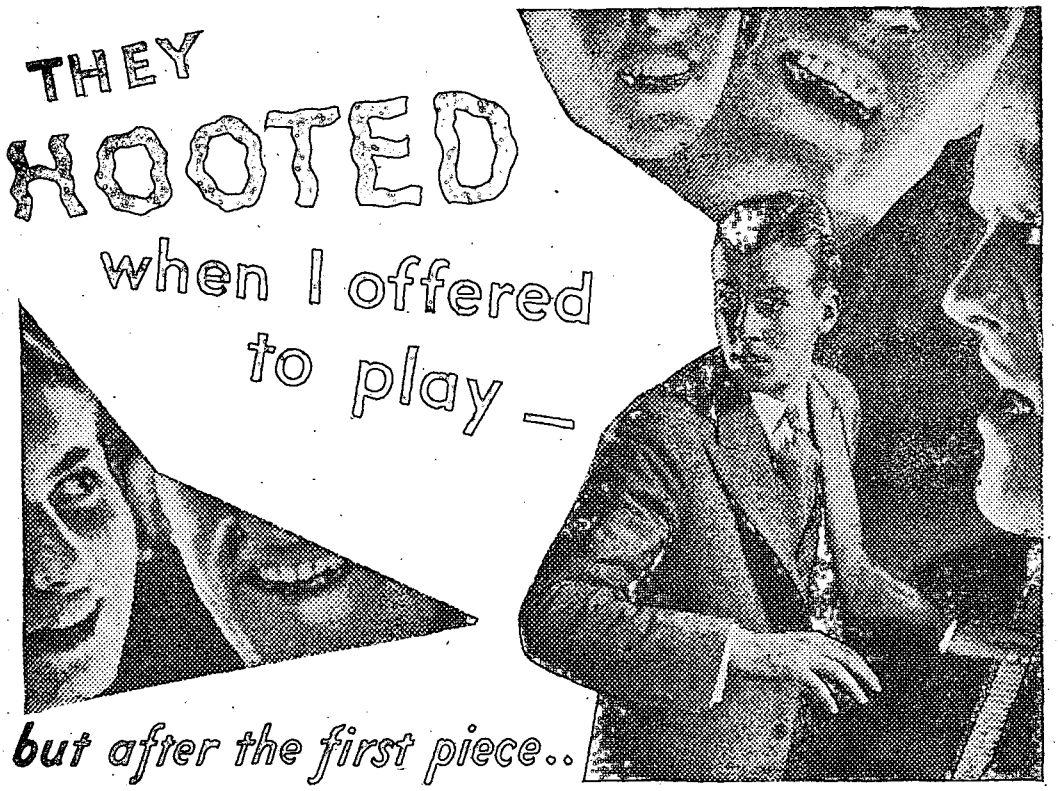

LOIS was almost in tears. It was her first big party. And—of course, the radio had to pick just that night to go on a vacation!

Poor Lois! The whole room-full of people sitting around, bored, hardly knowing what to do with themselves.

"Oh, Jack," she told me, "I'm nearly sick. Everybody is having a terrible time. We can't dance or anything."

"Well," I offered, gathering my courage, "I'll play for them to dance."

"You!" she exclaimed. "Why, you can't play, Jack. It's awfully sweet of you, but . . ."

"Watch me," I said. I faced the room and called out: "Folks, I'm going to play."

There was a chorus of good-humored hooting.

"Did anybody else hear what I did?" Ed laughed.

"Jack's a magician," Bill announced. "It's all done with mirrors."

I played up to the farcical mood, swept my hand over my hair and made a few grotesque flourishes. There was a gale of laughter.

Suddenly I swung into the joyous notes of "Happy Days." This was real playing, and suddenly the laughter ceased. At last I felt the thrill of being able to entertain, of *contributing* to the party.

When I stopped there was a moment of silence, and then I was deluged with questions. *When had I learned to play? Where had I studied? Who was my teacher? Where had I been hiding my talent all these years?*

How I Learned to Play.

I told them the whole story, how I had always longed to be able to play the piano but had never had the patience to sit down for hours and practice. Besides I could not have afforded to pay a private teacher.

But one day while looking through a magazine, I saw an advertisement of the U. S. School of Music. The ad offered to send a Free Demonstration Lesson to prove how easy it is to learn to play at home, without a teacher, in one's spare time.

PICK YOUR INSTRUMENT

Piano	Violin
Organ	Clarinet
Ukulele	Flute
Cornet	Saxophone
Trombone	Harp
Piccolo	Mandolin
Guitar	'Cello

Hawaiian Steel Guitar
Sight Singing
Piano Accordion
Italian and German Accordion
Voice and Speech Culture
Harmony and Composition
Drums and Traps
Automatic Finger Control
Banjo (Plectrum, 5-String or Tenor)
Juniors' Piano Course

"When that demonstration lesson came I saw at once how really easy and interesting the course was, and so I sent for it. Learning to play was actually fun—no finger-twisting exercise—no long hours practicing scales. It was as easy as A-B-C. But I didn't tell you folks because I wanted to be sure of myself first."

They could hardly believe me. But in a few minutes they begged me to play more, and everyone danced. Lois was happy and grateful. She said later that I had saved the party. And now that people know I can *really play* I have *invitations* out practically every night.

This is a typical story. More than 600,000 people who couldn't read one note from another have become good players by using the clear, simple method originated by the U. S. School of Music. The course is so graphic, so easy that a child can understand it. First it tells you what to do—then it *shows* you how in pictures—then you do it yourself and *hear* it.

To prove this, the U. S. School of Music has arranged to send you a Demonstration Lesson and Explanatory Booklet—*free!* They will show you how to play your favorite instrument in less than half the usual time, and at a cost of only a few cents a day. The booklet also explains the amazing New *Automatic Finger Control*.

If you really want to learn to play and have a host of friends—fill in the coupon below and send it in—*at once!* Instruments supplied if needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 3592 Brunswick Bldg., New York City.

For your enjoyment, every Sunday night the U. S. School of Music presents an unusual and interesting radio program over the Columbia Broadcasting national chain. Consult your paper for exact time.

U. S. SCHOOL OF MUSIC
3592 Brunswick Bldg., New York City

Please send me your free book, "Music Lessons in Your Own Home," with introduction by Dr. Frank Crane. Free Demonstration Lesson and particulars of your easy payment plan. I am interested in the following course:

Have you
.....Instrument? .....

Name .....

Address .....

City .....State .....

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RUPTURE IS NOT A TEAR

Rupture is not a tear, but is due to a muscular weakness in the abdominal wall. Trusses merely brace these muscles but do not *strengthen them*—on the contrary, the gouging of the ordinary truss pad often increases this weakness as it tends to shut off circulation of the blood.

STUART'S ADHESIF PLAPAO-PADS are **patentably different**—being mechanico-chemico applicators—made self-adhesive purposely to keep the muscle-tonic called "Plapao" continuously applied to the affected parts, and to minimize danger of slipping and painful friction. The adhesive fabric is **soft as velvet** and clings to the body **without straps, buckles or springs. Easy to apply—comfortable—inexpensive.** Awarded Gold Medal, Rome; Grand Prix, Paris; Honorable Mention, Panama Pacific Exposition, San Francisco, etc. For almost a quarter century stacks of **sworn testimonials** from many different countries report success—**without delay from work.** The epidermatic absorption of Plapao utilizing "*mechanico-chemico therapy*" *tends toward a natural process of recovery*, **after which no further use for a truss.**

Stop wasting your time and money on old-fashioned devices. Learn *how to close the hernial opening as nature intended*, **so the rupture can't come down.** Send no money; just mail the Free Test coupon below. For your own good—write today—tomorrow may be too late.

FREE TEST COUPON

PLAPAO CO., 2623 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Send me a Free 10-day test supply of the remedial factor Plapao and 48-page illustrated book on Rupture; no charge for this now or later.

Name .....

Address .....

MORE MONEY FOR YOU! SELL SHIRTS

Build a permanent repeat order business with Rosecliff's high grade Shirts, Ties, Underwear, Hosiery. Guaranteed One Full Year. Cash commissions, extra cash bonuses, shirts for yourself. We pay postage. Prompt service. Free sales outfit.... Write TODAY Dept. X 2

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Your opportunity can never be bigger than your preparation. Prepare now and reap the rewards in earlier and larger success. *Free 64-Page Books Tell How.* Write *now* for book you want, or mail coupon with your name and address in margin *today*.

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O Industrial Mgm't	O Expert Bookkeeping
O Banking and Finance	O C. P. A. Coaching
O Telegraphy	O Business English
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Dept. 265-R **Chicago**

STOMACH TROUBLE

Thousands of sufferers, many cases of years standing, after using the Udga Treatment report amazing recovery. Relieves you of pain, vomiting and other discomforts. Improvement steady and rapid. The Udga Treatment is highly recommended for Ulcers, severe chronic Gastritis, Acidosis, Dyspepsia, Indigestion caused by hyperacidity or faulty diet. 30 Day Trial with DEFINITE GUARANTEE of SATISFACTION or Money Refunded. WRITE for FREE valuable book on Stomach Sicknesses and letters of praise from former sufferers. $1,000.00 Reward to guarantee truth of our testimonials. Write Today!

UDGA COMPANY 2286 Dakota Bldg., St. Paul, Minn.

$-ALWAYS HAVE LUCK!-$

Unlucky in Money Games, Love or Business? You should carry a pair of genuine MYSTIC BRAHMA RED LIVE HIGHLY MAGNETIC LODE STONES. Rare, Amazing, Compelling, Attractive these LIVE LODESTONES are carried by Occult Oriental people as a POWERFUL LUCKY CHARM, *one to prevent* Bad Luck, Evil and Misfortune, and the other to attract much Good Luck, Love, Happiness and Prosperity. *Special only $1.97 for the two.* With valuable instructions FREE. Pay postman $1.97 and 15c. postage on delivery. Satisfaction or money refunded. You can be LUCKY! Order yours TODAY!

Dept. 385, P. S. BUREAU, General P. O. Box 72, Brooklyn, N. Y.

NOTICE! We absolutely GUARANTEE these genuine Mystic Brahma Lodestones are ALIVE! Just what you want, for they are the REAL THING—POWERFUL HIGHLY MAGNETIC! GET YOURS NOW!!

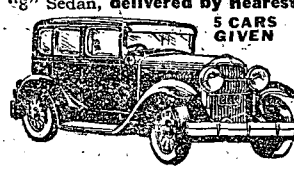
WIN $3000.00

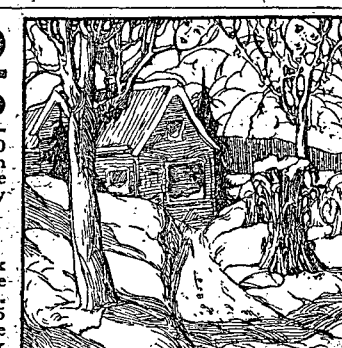
or $1,800.00 Buick and $1,200.00

Many Big Prizes offered you now—***more than $7000.00 distributed*** in 30 Grand Prizes—Someone surely wins Big $1800.00 Buick Sedan. If prompt $1200.00 additional. You can share in these Big Prizes. We paid S. H. Bennett $1495.00, C. L. Kittle $1050.00. These and hundreds of other people first answered my advertisement and won prizes, one as high as $3500.00.

FIND 5 FACES

Twilight on this winter scene makes strange shadows, some look exactly like girls' faces. How many can you find? Look in the trees, on the windows and snow drifts. **SHARP EYES CAN WIN.** Be Careful. Make No Mistake. If you are successful in finding 5 Faces, mark each with a circle. **Rush it to me** with your name and address by First Mail. Enter for this $1800.00 Big Buick "8" Sedan, **delivered by nearest Buick dealer,** and $1200.00 for Promptness, or $3000 cash.





$1200 Cash Extra

If prompt I'll pay the winner of First Prize $1200.00 Cash Extra. If you take an active part, **you are sure to be rewarded**—Duplicate prizes in case of ties. No matter who you are—try for Big $3000.00 First Prize. Send no money—nothing to buy now or later. State which you want, $3000.00 Cash or Buick Sedan and $1200.00. Bigger than ever. If you want to win, send for easy plan today—act now—no obligation. Address—

L. M. STONE, Mgr., 844 W. Adams St., Dept. 72, CHICAGO, ILL.

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Thousands of BIG PAY Jobs Open in Radio

"The Radio industry is growing so rapidly that it can easily absorb thousands of men with training each year".—Martin F. Flanagan, Executive Secretary, Radio Manufacturers Association.

Martin F. Flanagan

J. E. Smith
President

J. E. Smith, President National Radio Institute: "I am doubling and tripling the salaries of many by fitting them to fill big-pay jobs created every year by Radio's continued amazing growth."

I Will Train You at Home to Be a *Certified* Radio-Trician

MAIL the coupon below for my big, free book, "Rich Rewards in Radio". It gives full information on the many opportunities to earn $50, $60, $75 to $100 a week in this fast-growing industry. And it tells how you can learn quickly, at home, in your spare time, to fill a big-pay Radio job. My amazingly simple and *inexpensive* 50-50 home-study training is the secret! Lack of high school education or Radio experience are no drawbacks.

Many N. R. I. Men Make $50 to $100 a Week

Many fellows who had no Radio experience before taking my training are now earning $50 to $100 a week. Your chances are even better because my course has been improved and the opportunities in Radio are growing greater every year. I train you for all branches of Radio — manufacturing, operating in broadcasting stations and on ships, selling and servicing sets for dealers or in business for yourself—and many other lines, including Television, Aircraft Radio and Talking Pictures. Moreover, N. R. I. training is the only training that enables you to be a *Certified* RADIO-TRICIAN.

Many Earn $200 to $1000 Extra While Learning

You stay right at home, hold your present job and learn in your spare time. I teach you to begin making money shortly after you enroll. My new 50-50 practical method makes this possible. I give you eight big laboratory outfits that teach you to build and service practically every type of receiving set made. G. W. Page, 1807 21st Ave., S., Nashville, Tenn., writes: "I picked up $935 in my spare time while studying."

graduate

$100 a Week

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Witness Wanted

By Ethel K. Lockwood

VALERIE picked up the newspaper and slowly read the want advertisement again.

> Will attractive young lady who witnessed automobile accident at Hill and Mason, June 3rd, at 9 p. m., phone Hillcrest 2210. Strictly confidential. Immediate reward.

Why had she read it. Why had she been unable to push the paper aside and forget it? Why was she burning with a strange desire to answer it? These questions burned in her mind.

It was true that she was out of work and the mere matter of living had pulled her down until she was shabby and thin, but that was no reason why she should contemplate doing such an insane thing. She had not witnessed an automobile accident at Hill and Mason. She had never been at Hill and Mason in her life.

"T'rough with yer newspaper, leddy?"

A thin, querulous voice startled her and drew her eyes to the other end of the bench upon which she sat.

"Why — yes — certainly." With trembling fingers, she pushed the paper over toward her companion.

She was a woman—old, dirty and ragged, with a ratlike face and pale, furtive eyes.

"Nice here in the park, ain't it?" She grinned amiably. "I allus say, I'm glad I live in Californy. If you ain't got any place to sleep inside, you can allus find a place outside. An' you ain't goin' to freeze to death, either. Say, you're awful pretty. I'll bet you've been workin' in the movies!"

"No—er—I tried to," Valerie choked out, angry with herself for answering the creature at all.

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"Well, there's lots o' girls do that an' then wind up goin' crooked, an' things like that. But I'll bet you ain't that kind—you don't look like it—— Aw, don't run off, I didn't aim to peeve you."

But Valerie was already walking swiftly down one of the shrub-bordered walks. Though she tried to act as though she were really going some place her steps lagged. She had not eaten since the day before, but she did have a room to stay in. Mrs. Bennett, her landlady, had told her that she could keep it another week and maybe then she would have a job.

Darkness was coming on and lights suddenly began to flash all around her. One bright-colored sign across the street caught her eye and she stood unable to move, fascinated by it. On one second, off the next—"Begg's Cafeteria."

Finally she tore her eyes away from it and started walking again. She had just a dollar in her bag, but she had better save that for morning she told herself. She would be hungrier then.

"Hey, baby! How about a little walk together?" A low, hoarse voice at her elbow made her start and she turned startled eyes up into the face of a man who looked as though he might be a helper on some freighter. Wordless she stared at him and finally the pale beauty of her stricken face sent him hurrying down the street with a muttered apology.

Valerie's hair was golden; her eyes soft and brown, and her lashes were so long that they almost swept her eyebrows when she opened her eyes wide.

That was why every one in Idaho had been so sure she was slated for success in moving pictures. That was why she was here—now—penniless, alone. That was why she was listening to temptation as she never had in her life before.

The want ad, with its suggestion of quick, easy money, was still in her mind.

Why not take a chance?—she asked herself. The accident had evidently occurred at night. Perhaps the people in the car had noticed the girl only casually. Perhaps the real girl would never see the advertisement at all. Perhaps she could make enough money to brush up on her shorthand and get a job.

Oh, how wonderful it would be to have some new clothes and good food again!

She came to a drug store and stood hesitantly in front of it. Why not take a chance?—she asked herself again. In a second she had made up her mind and, turning quickly, went into the drug store and toward the phone booth at the back.

"Hillcrest 2210," she murmured when the operator answered. A moment later there was a man's voice on the wire. Then: "I'm telephoning in answer to your ad. I think I am the young lady you are looking for."

Shaking so she could hardly hold the pencil in her fingers, she wrote down the address he gave her. Then she looped the string, to which the pencil was attached, around a hook on the wall. She stood there for several minutes, dazed and uncertain, winding and unwinding the length of string. Then she dropped it, as though it had suddenly burned her fingers, and walked resolutely out of the booth.

"You say you were standing on the corner of Hill and Mason, waiting for a street car, when the car in which my client was riding was hit by the other one?"

It was nine o'clock.

Valerie was seated in a huge oak chair across the desk from a small, bald-headed man with a thin, hawklike face and piercing gray eyes. The room was large, with a stone fireplace and rich, oak-paneled walls.

"You say, also," the man went on, "that the other car was plainly at fault, that the driver was undoubtedly intoxicated, and that you will be willing to testify to that in court?"

"Yes." Valerie forced the word out.

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Her voice was little more than a whisper.

"You're quite sure you wish to swear that this is true—on your word of honor?"

"Yes."

Valerie gasped. The room was spinning around weirdly. She felt weak—uncertain. But she was grimly determined to put the thing over. She'd gone this far—she wouldn't give up now.

"My dear Miss Abbott." The man relaxed in his chair and smiled knowingly. "You are a magnificent liar. I think you will do—admirably."

"You—what?" Valerie felt herself going cold from head to foot. Terror seized her.

"I say you lie beautifully. And I need a beautiful liar right now more than anything else in the world. You're hired."

"I don't understand."

"Oh, yes you do. You couldn't have witnessed the accident we've been talking about. There wasn't any such accident!"

"There—wasn't—any accident?"

"No. I wanted to secure a girl desperate enough to carry out a certain plan of mine. I knew that any girl who would answer the ad I inserted would be just the type to go through with the proposition I have to offer. I can assure you, you are entirely satisfactory."

"You mean—it's work—a position?" Hope came back to her.

"In a fashion. I am Thomas Dole, an attorney. My client, Stephen Elwell, must marry one Louise Duphrane to inherit the enormous fortune left to him by his father. His father, in an effort to right a wrong done in his past, insisted that his son find and marry the daughter of an old sweetheart, whom he cruelly jilted. The sweetheart died in poverty, and the elder Elwell wished to save the daughter from a similar fate. I don't ask you to believe what I am telling you without proof. Read this."

Valerie leaned forward. On the desk before her was a typewritten legal document, signed and witnessed, and with an imposing gold seal. Scarcely conscious of what she was doing, her eyes ran over it.

One phrase stood out.

I insist that my son, Stephen, marry the said Louise Duphrane and give her every luxury, if she is alive and of sound mind.

"But where do I come in? Why are you doing this?" Amazement overcame terror as Valerie began to comprehend the extent of the plot. "What about this girl—and me?"

"If I find the girl and she marries Steve, I am to receive half a million dollars as my reward. If she is not found, Steve gets only half the estate. The rest goes to charity and I receive only ten thousand dollars. There is one condition: if the girl is found, and she proves to be unsuitable in any way, Steve is to receive the entire estate with no strings attached. But that will be impossible. I have proof that the girl is dead. But if I can prove that she isn't, and that you are she——" he finished with a shrug of his shoulders.

"You mean—you want me to pretend that I am Louise Duphrane—and marry Stephen Elwell?"

"Yes. You need not live with him. Only go through the ceremony so that Steve can receive his money and I mine. I will see that you are paid ten thousand dollars. I will also see that you are divorced without any expense or inconvenience to yourself."

"Oh!" Valerie sprang to her feet, her cheeks flushed, her eyes blazing. "I never heard of anything so terrible! I certainly will not have anything to do with such a plot!"

"Just a minute, young lady." Thomas Dole arose and rushed after Valerie, who was already at the door. "You came here under false pretenses. You were quite willing to lie and be paid for

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it. I fail to see why you are so fussy now. I want you. You are exactly the type I need. And I don't mind saying, I would not hesitate to make things mighty unpleasant for you, if you found that you didn't want to help me. There are any number of little things I could trump up—blackmail, for instance."

"Oh, it's too terrible to think about!" Valerie clung weakly to the door, tears of indignation in her eyes.

"Nonsense! Who could possibly suffer from such an arrangement? Not Steve, who gets twice as much money as he would if we didn't find the girl; certainly not you—not me. Here's two hundred dollars." He reached in a pocket and brought out a roll of bills. "Get yourself some good clothes and be here at eleven o'clock in the morning. I must telephone Steve, now, and tell him I've found Louise!"

Valerie left Thomas Dole's house firmly convinced that she would return the money and refuse to see him again. Blackmail? What did she care about blackmail? It was all an infamous plot. She would have nothing to do with it.

But she was frightfully conscious of the roll of bills in her purse. She was conscious, again, that she was hungry—and had money to buy food with.

She reached her rooming house weak and uncertain. Just inside the hall, she met Mrs. Bennett.

"Good evening, my dear." Her landlady's voice was unnaturally loud and harsh. "Get work to-day? It's too bad you hung around the movie studios 'til you got so shabby. I could have told you, no good could come of it. I've warned lots of girls——"

"Please, Mrs. Bennett," Valerie interrupted hoarsely, "not to-night. I don't feel like talking. I haven't got work yet, and I'm awfully tired. I think I'll go right up to my room."

"Why—er—you see—I rented it this afternoon. I had such a good chance—lovely young lady, she pays me so well, and she wanted to be in this neighborhood to be near her boy friend—has a car, too, and I had a garage empty. Oh, here she comes down the stairs now.

"Oh, Miss Williams, come here," Mrs. Bennett called out as she shifted her gaze from Valerie to an overweight blonde who was coming toward them. "Miss Honey Williams—meet Miss Valerie Abbott."

Valerie looked at the girl, but her lips refused to move.

"Charmed," Honey Williams smiled ingratiatingly. "Sorry to take your room, but Mrs. Bennett said you were going away, anyway, and Charley, my boy friend, said I just had to live here. You know how men are when they're crazy about you!"

Something snapped in Valerie's tired brain. With a queer, twisted smile, she looked from Mrs. Bennett—a thin, brown wren of a woman with dyed hair and bad-fitting false teeth—to the Williams girl, thick-lipped, with streaked and straggly yellow hair and coarse, greasy skin.

"Pays so well—has a car—boy friend—said I just had to live here." The words rang in her ears.

"It's all right, ain't it, Miss Abbott?" Mrs. Bennett flushed uneasily under Valerie's continued stare.

"Yes, indeed." Valerie clutched her shabby bag to her and laughed wildly. "If you'll get my things for me—and call a taxi—I'll appreciate it so much. I'll go over to the Biltmore for to-night. I'm glad you rented the room. I don't want it any longer, anyway. You see, I've just come into a lot of money!"

Valerie faced the new day with desperate calmness. She bathed and dressed and left the big hotel before the breakfast crowd got down.

It was too early for the stores to be open when she reached Broadway, so she walked quietly up and down, gazing

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Valerie was seated in a huge chair across the desk from a small, baldheaded man with a thin, hawklike face and piercing, gray eyes.

into shop windows and wondering what she was going to buy when she got inside.

She had no intention of turning back from her disagreeable bargain now. And she wasn't going to let her conscience get to working again, either. Other girls, not half so pretty, had fine clothes and good times, and they didn't work for them. Why should she go on, looking for work—starving—weeping—as she had been the past three months, when Fate, and Thomas Dole, had thrown such an opportunity at her?

Old man Elwell must have been crazy to make such a will in the first place, and if Stephen Elwell let himself be fooled by an unscrupulous lawyer, that was his hard luck, she told herself. Personally, it was her job to look innocent and sweet—and take the money. And that was exactly what she was going to do.

At eleven o'clock she was back at Thomas Dole's. She was dressed in a smart tan ensemble with slippers, hat, bag and gloves to match. Her head was held high, and her eyes sparkled.

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"I didn't come back because I was afraid of you," she told him. "I came back because Fate kicked me out of my room and I had to use your money to rent another or sleep in the streets. That blow finished my conscience and my pride. I'm here to go on with your proposition."

"You're a wise girl, although I prefer you a bit softer than you seem to be this morning," Mr. Dole answered. "Sit down. I have some things here I want to show you."

Valerie seated herself in front of the desk. The man drew out a heavy cardboard box and opened it.

"Here is a packet of old love letters from Stephen Elwell's father to Louise Duphrane's mother." He shoved the letters toward her. "Here, as you see, is an old ring—evidently a gift from Mr. Elwell to the lady. Here are some baby shoes and trinkets, and a dress—probably worn at some long-remembered affair. Everything is authentic. Look the articles over carefully and familiarize yourself with them. They belonged to *your* mother—from now on. Remember that."

"Oh, Mr. Dole, how could you do this?" Valerie shuddered. "And where did you get these things?"

"As I told you last night, the girl is dead. I found her, but it was too late. These things were in her room. There's the bell. Stephen is evidently eager to see you. He's half an hour early. But that's all right. Put the box down on the floor under your chair. Relax, my dear, and look a little more human. I'm going out into the hall to meet him."

A moment later he was back, and with him was a tall young man with deep-set gray eyes and a finely modeled jaw. Valerie caught her breath sharply as he looked down into her eyes.

"Miss Duphrane, may I present Mr. Elwell?"

Valerie murmured a vague, "How do you do."

"Please let's be informal." Stephen, flushing, extended his hand. Then he smiled and Valerie noticed that his teeth were even and white, his mouth as youthful and mischievous as a boy's. "We both know what's expected of us," he went on, "so we may just as well like or dislike each other right off the bat. I have no intention of prolonging the agony myself. I either like people or I don't. Frankly, I like you. But if you don't like me, there'll be no wedding—no matter how much money is involved."

Strangely thrilled, Valerie laid her hand in his.

"I feel the same way about the whole thing," she said breathlessly. "And—I like you, too."

"All right, children," Dole beamed upon them. "Draw up your chairs close to the desk and let's see what there is to do next. Louise, you'll want to show Stephen your mother's keepsakes. And what are your plans, Stephen?"

"Evelyn wants to go up to our camp in the Sierras, Mr. Dole, so I plan on taking Miss—er—Louise up there with us. I'll have to run into town occasionally, but she can stay and keep Evelyn company."

"The Sierras?" Thomas Dole's brow clouded. "Why—you haven't been up there for years! I thought you were going to sell the lodge. Surely you don't want to go up there now."

"Frankly, I don't, but Evelyn—my invalid sister, Louise—insists upon going. Says she needs a change of climate and the doctor said the mountains would be good for her. If we go, why don't you come up, too, Mr. Dole? Your place is only half a mile or so from ours, isn't it?"

"Farther than that—and entirely closed up. I haven't seen it for months—may be burned down by this time for all I know. There have been a lot of forest fires up around there, you know. It seems like a crazy idea for me, anyway. You'll want to show Louise the

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town—she'll have shopping to do. You're too lenient with Evelyn, Stephen. She's not really an invalid, she can walk."

"At times. But you know how she depends upon me, and she wants to go. Would you like to go up into the mountains, Louise?"

"Oh, yes." What crazy thing was happening to her now?—Valerie asked herself. The whole color of her adventure had suddenly changed. She wanted to go on with it! She wanted to go with Stephen—anywhere!

"Then we'll go." He smiled at her—a warm, happy smile that set her nerves tingling.

"All right," Mr. Dole agreed grudgingly, "if you're so set on it, I suppose we may as well go. I can take a few weeks off, if necessary."

"You won't have to go, Mr. Dole." Stephen shifted his gaze from Valerie to the attorney. "I just thought you might like to. It isn't at all necessary."

The lawyer nodded his head.

"Yes, it is. We might want to talk things over. I'll be ready." He was still frowning, a queer, calculating light in his eyes. "When do you start?"

"To-morrow morning. But I thought I'd take Louise home with me now. I want her to meet Evelyn."

"You think Evelyn's going to take it all right?"

Stephen hesitated a moment.

"Oh, she's not pleased with the idea of my marrying anybody. But I'm sure Louise can make friends with her."

"I hope so." Thomas Dole tapped nervously on the desk top with a slender, bony finger. "But I can't see this going up into the mountains. It seems a queer thing to do."

"I don't think so. Evelyn's full of queer notions, you know. That comes from long illness—and being alone so much."

"And the way you spoil her," Dole added quickly.

"Perhaps. But she has been ill, and I'm sorry for her. Ready, Louise? I think we'd better run along now."

Evelyn Elwell, a pale-faced woman of about Stephen's age, met them at the door of Stephen's comfortable home. She was in a wheel chair, a whitecapped nurse behind her. Valerie's new-found happiness suffered a shock when she looked at the cold-eyed woman with her grim, thin-lipped mouth.

"Evelyn, this is Louise Duphrane." Stephen smiled happily as he bent down and gently kissed his sister's frowning brow.

"Louise Duphrane?" She gave Valerie a quick, searching glance. "Well, I think the whole thing is silly beyond words. Dad was a fool and so is Stephen, letting that crazy Dole chase all over the country looking for a girl he's never seen so he can marry her. I've always thought Dole was crooked, and how do we know that you are Louise Duphrane?"

Valerie shook with a sudden chill. Her heart pounded so hard she was afraid Stephen would notice it. But she forced herself to smile.

"I'm sorry you don't approve of what has happened. But I hope you will learn to like me."

"Well, I won't, I can tell you that right now. What about going up to camp, Stephen? I suppose you had to tell Dole about that, too?"

"Yes, of course." Stephen was plainly upset, his anxious eyes in wordless pleading on Valerie's face.

"What did he say?"

"He didn't like the idea. And I don't either. Not right now. Louise is sure to get tired of me if we're stuck up in a mountain lodge alone before we get acquainted. Can't we wait until later?"

"No," Evelyn snarled. "And we won't be alone. I'm going to have some week-end parties and things like that. I've got to make some friends of my

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own if you're going to get married. If you won't go with me, I'll go anyway."

"Of course, we'll go with you, Evelyn." Stephen patted her shoulder consolingly. "And we'll start in the morning if you want to."

"I do. And now let's go in and have lunch. You've kept me waiting until I'm almost starved."

Valerie was too disturbed to enjoy her lunch. It was plain to be seen that Evelyn was going to make things as difficult for her as she could.

After lunch, Stephen insisted upon taking her to a matinée, and for a drive afterward.

Again Valerie's spirits soared. She would seize her happiness while she could. The future would have to take care of itself.

The next morning found them on their way to the high Sierras. Valerie thought she had never seen anything so beautiful as the winding road through the towering trees. Finally they reached Stephen's camp, an old log cabin on the edge of a tiny lake.

The ride had been thrilling, too. Valerie had sat by Stephen in the front seat of the car, Evelyn and the nurse in the back. Evelyn had been in better spirits than the day before, and Stephen the most alluring male person she had ever encountered.

Mr. Dole was coming up the next day.

"Where is his house?" Valerie had asked as they wound around the steep grades just before they reached the lodge.

"A mile or so to the right," Stephen had said. "Years ago, a rich man from the East built a huge home in a particularly lonely spot in the woods. He was mysteriously killed there, and the place was sold for a song. Mr. Dole, who isn't sensitive about anything like that, was the fortunate purchaser. He was married then, and he lived there with his wife for several summers. There's an odd-looking tower on the place, too. That's the only thing you can see from our lodge."

Later he pointed the tower out to her. It was a square log and rock affair, built without any regard at all for beauty, and it stuck up through the pine trees like something ugly and foreign.

"No wonder the house is deserted," Valerie said. "I wouldn't come up here either if the whole place is as unattractive and forbidding as the tower looks. Ugh! It gives me the creeps."

Darkness had started to fall and Stephen and Valerie were alone at the edge of the lake, sitting on a fallen log and chatting like old friends.

"I've never believed in Fate," Stephen said, "but I do, now. You'll never make me believe Fate didn't have something to do with Dole finding you. He's been searching all over the country for three years. You see, we had so little to go on. Dad had kept that chapter of his life closed. It was only when he was dying that he told about it—or the will. Then, he told Dole. I got my information secondhand."

So that was why Stephen was such an easy mark for a man like Thomas Dole. He didn't know anything about the affair at all—except that his father wanted him to marry the girl. It was lucky for her, Valerie thought. Now she need never be afraid of betraying any secrets of her past, since Stephen could not possibly check up on her.

"I wonder where you were all the time Dole was looking for you? What were you doing, Louise?"

"Working—here and there. I've been a stenographer ever since I was fifteen."

"You must have had a lot of hard knocks. It's nothing short of a miracle that we found you. Oh, Louise, I know it sounds crazy, but I feel as though I'd known you always—that you belong to me, somehow!"

Valerie thrilled at his words.

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"It's all so queer. I have to pinch myself to realize it's not a dream," she answered softly.

"You feel like that, too? Oh, Louise, I can't believe such a wonderful thing has happened, but I love you. I know it." Then, before she realized it, he had taken her in his arms.

"Tell me you like me," he went on eagerly. "Tell me that you'll try to love me."

"I don't have to try," she whispered huskily as he bent his head and his lips neared hers. "I love you—already!"

Back in her room, half an hour later, Valerie gave herself up to happy reflection. Stephen loved her—she loved him. How they had met—or why—had nothing to do with it. Stephen might resent the fact that she was not the real Louise, but would she ever have to tell him? Dole was the only other person who knew, and certainly it would not be to his advantage to talk too freely.

Stephen! Oh, wasn't he wonderful? Wasn't it all wonderful?—she asked herself. Soon she's be Stephen's wife, the mistress of his home. She could hardly realize that it was really true!

The next day Thomas Dole arrived. He seemed in a better humor than when they had left him two days before in town, but he was hardly as self-possessed as he had been the night Valerie had first met him.

Stephen and Valerie were out rowing when he saw them. He called to them and they came in to the shore.

"I'm going to rest, as long as I'm up here," he said, after greeting them, "so don't count me in on any of your parties. I'll be alone over at my place, and I'll not be in any shape to meet people. I'll appreciate it, if you'll see that I am not disturbed in any way by your crowd.

"Another thing I neglected to mention the other day. Your time limit on your marriage to Louise falls on Wednesday. I don't know whether I ever told you you must marry her before a certain date, Stephen."

"No, you didn't, Mr. Dole." Stephen grinned happily. "But it can't be too soon to suit me. I think Louise is the most wonderful girl in the world."

Valerie's heart beat fast with joy, but the thought of an immediate marriage frightened her.

"Why—it seems—so soon." She caught her breath sharply.

"I suppose, Louise," Mr. Dole interrupted quickly, "you'll want to buy some new clothes. It takes three days to get married in California, remember. You'll have to leave here not later than Saturday!"

"Saturday?" Stephen sobered. "Why—we just got here."

"I can't help that, Stephen." Mr. Dole stared hard at the younger man. "Laws are laws and wills are wills. Wou'll have to be married by Wednesday, or all my work will have been for nothing. I'll go along, now. Expect me when you see me."

Dole left, and Stephen found a grassy knoll at the foot of a huge oak tree. There he seated Valerie, like a queen, then threw himself down beside her.

"Darling, does it really frighten you to think of marrying me?" He caught one of her hands in his and kissed it.

"Not you. Just marrying—it's so real and permanent—somehow. And we've just met—you don't really know me at all."

"We'll be married, sweetheart, but you can be just as free as you are now until you are ready to be my wife. That ought to make it easier for you. And we won't leave here, either, until Monday. We'll drive into the city, hire a plane and fly over into Arizona to be married. Dole isn't going to run the whole show. I like it up here. I had no idea it was so beautiful."

"It's the most beautiful spot I've ever seen," Valerie answered huskily. "I feel that I'd like to live here, always!"

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"With me, honey?" He caught her close to him.

"With you, dear," she answered softly.

The following day was like all others. Stephen and Valerie were alone with their love—the mountains, the lake and the little wood creatures. They hiked for miles. They fished. They rode. They swam. They left the lodge after breakfast and returned to it after sundown.

There was a capable mountain woman in charge of the lodge. Her husband chopped the wood, brought up the mail and attended to all the outside work. They did not have to worry about the house, and the nurse was there to look after Evelyn.

Evelyn had seemed particularly quiet since their arrival. They had not seen her at breakfast that day, and when they had come in to dinner the night before, she had been pleasingly indifferent to their growing absorption in each other.

This evening, however, she was in a surly mood. Valerie hurried in with some wild flowers she had gathered. Evelyn was in the living room, reading.

"They're for you." Valerie smiled as

Darkness had started to fall and Stephen and Valerie were alone at the edge of the lake, sitting on a fallen log and chatting like old friends.

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she extended them toward the invalid girl.

"I don't want them," Evelyn snapped angrily. "How dare you stay away from me all day and then come in with a bunch of weeds to make up for it! And you, Stephen, neglecting me like a dog! Oh, I hate you both!"

"Please, Evelyn." Stephen rushed to her side and caught her in his arms. "We didn't think you'd mind, since you couldn't go with us. We're so happy—I suppose we do seem selfish."

"What right have you to be happy when I have to be alone and suffering? You're both acting like fools. Money certainly does queer things to people, but I didn't think it would make two apparently normal persons act like perfect idiots. Get out—both of you. There's a letter for you in the hall, Stephen. Maybe that will jar you out of your obsession for a minute."

Valerie followed Stephen out into the hall, a strange, new feeling of foreboding around her heart. Why must Evelyn be so bitter?

"What is it, dear?" She caught hold of Stephen's arm and looked up at him with tear-filled eyes.

"Nothing important, darling." He folded the letter, stuck it into his pocket, and took her in his arms. "Why, Louise, you're crying. Don't do that, honey. It's nothing. A little mix-up at the office. I'll have to run into town to-morrow. If I drive every minute I'm not in the office, I can get back here by the following afternoon."

"You'll have to stay in town to-morrow night?"

He nodded.

"Yes, dear. But I'll hurry—hurry—hurry!"

"Oh, Stephen," she cried out, "take me with you. I'm afraid to stay here."

"I couldn't do that, darling. I'm in too much of a hurry. And you could never stand such hard driving. It would knock you out for a week."

"Stephen, would you think I was silly, if I told you I'm afraid of Evelyn? She scares me. Honestly, she does."

"Why, honey, how foolish! A poor, sick girl who can hardly get out of her chair alone! Evelyn couldn't hurt you, Louise."

"But she hates me so. I can see it in her eyes."

"Nonsense. She's always nagging about something, but it doesn't mean anything. If she gets too bossy while I am gone, just tell her where to get off. You'll be my wife, soon. Use a little of that authority now."

"And you'll come back—sure—day after to-morrow?"

"Certainly. Oh, you little dark-eyed darling, do you think I want to be away from you for a minute?"

Valerie spent the hours from dinner until bedtime in Stephen's arms. They sat out on the veranda in the low porch swing. A moon, round as a plate, seeped over the tops of the lacy pine trees, and the mountain odors were tantalizingly sweet.

They talked little. Stephen held her close, his lips on her soft hair. Oh, would there never be another night like this—so wonderful, so complete?—Valerie asked herself.

Then—it was time to go in. Stephen kissed her repeatedly.

"I'll be leaving at three o'clock in the morning, long before you are up, precious," he told her, "so I must kiss you good night and good-by all at once. Have a good time while I'm away and don't be afraid of anything or anybody. I'll be back day after to-morrow, sure."

Valerie awoke with a feeling of heaviness around her heart. Instantly, she knew. Stephen was gone. She was alone in the cabin with Evelyn. And Evelyn hated her. No matter what Stephen said, she knew that was true. Thomas Dole said Stephen had always babied and fussed over her. Well, she

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might be a spoiled child to Stephen, but she was a dangerous woman to Valerie. She dressed and went down to breakfast, hoping against hope that Evelyn would not be there.

But she was. And to Valerie's great surprise, she was smiling.

"Sit down," she said, as Valerie entered the great, oak-beamed dining room. "You know, I'm ashamed of being so rude to you last night. You're such a silly, young thing. You probably don't know any better."

"Why—I——" Valerie began uncertainly.

"I don't see how any girl could be so silly. Are you really falling for the line my brother is handing you? Do you really believe he loves you?"

"He has told me so."

Evelyn shrugged her shoulders carelessly. "Naturally. It would be a poor man who wouldn't lie for three million dollars. But a brainy girl wouldn't swallow it. Of course, it's quite all right for you to marry him and get your share of the money—whatever that happens to be—but how you can believe he loves you, is beyond me."

"If Stephen doesn't love me I won't marry him, and I don't want any of the money!" Valerie answered hotly.

"Very likely." Evelyn narrowed her eyes and smiled wryly. "Of course, if you won't take my tip and save yourself a lot of worry, that's your business. Steve was crazy about Clarice Stebbens before you came into the picture. Naturally, he had to give her up until he could marry you and get the money, but you'll see what happens after you are married to him. It might interest you to know that Stephen's bringing Clarice and her gang up here for the week-end."

"Excuse me." Valerie arose from the table, her breakfast untasted. "I'm going for a walk. I don't feel hungry."

She stayed away from the house until noon. When she got back, Thomas Dole was there.

"Mr. Dole," she said to him the first time she found him alone, "I'm afraid I can't go through with this—after all. Evelyn suspects me. She hates me."

"Oh, so she's at your throat?" He swore softly to himself. "I was afraid of that. She's a year older than Steve, and you'd think she was ten years younger, the way he treats her. She's always wound him around her little finger. Steve's a soft-hearted fool. He ought to shake her teeth down her throat. Well, don't let her scare you. She's only bluffing. She doesn't really suspect anything."

Mr. Dole stayed to dinner and everything went along smoothly, but Valerie was still disturbed. Excusing herself early, she went up to her room, to sit there for hours—thinking over what Evelyn had said about Stephen. He couldn't have been lying about his love for her—oh, he couldn't—he couldn't!

The next morning, Evelyn was not at breakfast. After Valerie had eaten, she went out to the garage where Sam Wixson, the hired man, was backing an old car out of the shed.

"Sam," she called out, "if you're going down after the mail, I'd like to go with you."

"Sorry, Miss Louise," he answered with a grin, "Miss Evelyn told me last night that she and the nurse were going."

"Miss Evelyn? In that car?"

"That's what she said. Maybe you'd like to go horseback riding instead?"

"Yes, that's a good idea. It's not so lonely as walking. I'll run in and change my clothes while you saddle the horse."

Valerie returned at three o'clock. Evelyn was in her chair on the front veranda—the nurse in the hammock at her side.

"Didn't you go to town?" Valerie asked casually as she crossed the porch to the front door.

Evelyn flashed her an ugly look.

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"No," she said emphatically, "I changed my mind."

Dinner time came and Stephen had not returned. Much as Valerie disliked to question Evelyn, she couldn't resist.

"Isn't it about time Stephen got home?" She tried to appear calm and disinterested as she seated herself at the dinner table.

"Oh, were you looking for Stephen, to-night?" Evelyn asked innocently. "I could have told you before. He's staying over in town. Clarice is giving a party. Odd he didn't tell you before he left."

Valerie forced herself to finish the meal. She wouldn't give Evelyn the satisfaction of chasing her away from the table again. But she made no pretense of being sociable afterward. With a heavy, sinking heart, she went up to her room.

At midnight, she gave up hope, undressed and went to bed.

Stephen had not come home, and he had said he would. Evelyn had said he wouldn't. And Evelyn had been right.

Valerie didn't sleep. Hour after hour crept by while Valerie visioned the man she loved with his arms around another woman.

With the first gray streaks of dawn, there came a sharp knock at Valerie's door. Trembling from head to foot, she crept over and opened it.

Evelyn stood in the hall! And the nurse was not with her!

"I didn't know you could walk alone!" Valerie's eyes bulged with amazement and apprehension as Evelyn came into the room.

"I can when I want to bad enough." Evelyn's thin face was haggard, her eyes shadowed with deep, blue rings, her hands shaking. "Listen," she whispered hoarsely, "now I'm going to ask you to go! You've got to! I've thought it all out—and I don't think you're Louise Duphrane at all—and if you don't go, I'm going to tell Stephen! You're young and pretty, you can marry some one else. Can't you see I've got to have Stephen—he's all I've got—all I'll ever have!

"Didn't I tell you last night that he wouldn't come home? Maybe you'll believe me now when I tell you he was fooling you all along! Use your sense—if you have any! Would a man fall in love with the very woman he was supposed to—the way Steve did!

"Go back to town before Steve gets here! Tell him you've changed your mind—anything. I'll give you some money. And I'll get Sam to drive you down to the stage——"

"No!" Valerie interrupted. "I won't run away like a thief. I'll stay and see Stephen and hear him say he doesn't love me before I leave. You have no proof that I'm not Louise Duphrane. Go away! I don't want to see you—or any one else—until Stephen comes home."

She was crying now—great, choking sobs that shook her slender form from head to foot.

Evelyn opened the door quietly and went out.

Valerie threw herself face downward on the bed.

It was one o'clock in the afternoon, when she awoke.

If Stephen wasn't at home by the time she got downstairs, she was going over to see Thomas Dole, she told herself. It was too dangerous for her to marry Steve, now, with Evelyn so suspicious. She had better tell Steve the truth, even if it meant she would never see him again!

She went quietly down the back stairs and stopped in at the kitchen for a cup of coffee.

"Mrs. Wixson," she addressed the hired woman who was busy at the sink, "do I take the left-hand trail to Mr. Dole's house?"

"Yes, honey," Mrs. Wixson answered smilingly. "Although why you want to

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Frightened, but determined, Valerie forced her way up through the semidarkness. Then she saw two women, one a pale, thin creature—the other, old, stooped.

go over to that spooky place is beyond me."

Valerie walked briskly along through the giant pine trees in the direction of Dole's estate. She had to see him—before Stephen got back. She could not marry Stephen with Evelyn so suspicious. Thomas Dole might as well know it.

Dole's house was set more than a quarter of a mile off the road. The grounds had never been cleared, and it was with difficulty that Valerie followed the weed-grown trail that led up to it. The entire exterior was as grim-looking as the tower.

Most of the windows were boarded up, except in the tower, which stood at one side, well to the back. There was no doorbell.

Doubling up her fist, Valerie rapped vigorously on the huge, oak door. She got no answer. She knocked three or four times, then she pushed her way through a tangle of underbrush and went around to the side of the house.

There was no sign of life anywhere. The dead stillness made her flesh creep.

Suddenly she heard a faint moan! It came from the direction of the tower!

Knees weak and heart pounding, she sought a narrow door that apparently led to the upper floors on that side of the house. It was unlocked. She opened it cautiously.

Another moan! And it was a woman's voice!

Fighting a desire to turn and run, she crept inside. Some one needed help; she couldn't be a coward and run away.

Valerie started up the narrow stairs. Her feet, in their crêpe-soled oxfords, made no sound.

That moan again! And this time with it another voice—stronger—different.

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Frightened, but determined, Valerie forced her way up through the semi-darkness. As her head came up on a level with the top step of the third floor, she saw them—two women—one a pale, thin creature with long, straggly black hair and oddly burning, black eyes—the other, old, stooped, with thin, knotty hands and a badly bent back.

"Come on, honey," the older woman said hoarsely. "This is the first time they've all been gone at once—the boss and them two flunkies of his. You ain't got anything to be scared of—just hurry. We'll get outside an' hide. I've got blankets thrown out the window—we'll find our way outa this wilderness by mornin'."

"I'm 'fraid, granny, I'm 'fraid," the younger one whimpered.

Valerie summoned up all her courage and approached them.

"Please," she said as quietly as she could above her pounding heart, "can I help?"

"O-o-o-o-oh!" The younger one screamed, but the older woman promptly clapped her hand over the other's mouth.

"I won't hurt you—either of you." Valerie approached them timidly.

"Won't yuh?" The old woman peered eagerly at Valerie. "Mebbe yuh got an auto and you'd help us get down the mountain?"

"No, I haven't a car, but I'll be glad to help you. Who are you, and where do you want to go?"

"We want to go back to Utah, where we came from. He—that Dole—told us we was comin' here to get some money that was comin' to her, then he brought us up here and hid us—six months ago, it was—an' guarded us like dogs. I've got a good house an' enough to live on, but I thought mebbe the money would do her some good."

"Her?" Valerie stared at the vacant-eyed younger woman.

"Yes. She ain't right in her head. She ain't been since she was born. Sometimes she gets better, but she's been worse since we came here. I've been sick, too—I think he aimed to kill us."

"Oh!" Valerie clung weakly to the rough wall. "And your name?"

"Haller's mine, miss, an' my granddaughter's Louise——"

It was then Valerie knew.

"Duphrane!" She finished grimly.

"Yes. Howd'ye know?"

"I——"

Then Valerie's blood ran cold. There was a crunching footstep below—outside.

"Quick!" she whispered hoarsely. "Get back to your rooms. Some one's coming. I'll have to get away. Stay where you are—I'll send for you. Oh, go! Go!"

Valerie never knew just how she got out of the house. She was so weak she could hardly stand. But apparently she made her get-away without detection. There was no one behind her. After a moment of rest, she pulled herself together and hurried up the road.

It was nearly six when Valerie came in sight of Stephen's house. She was so weary and weak, she could hardly climb the steps. Inside, there was music, conversation and strange voices.

So Stephen had come back, and brought Clarice and the others with him!

White and shaking, she entered the hall, and stood for a moment looking in at the merry gathering. Evelyn, in her chair, in the center of the group. A tall, dark-haired girl with heavily rouged lips and a languid air. Two smaller girls, one dark—one light. Two good-looking young men—and Stephen.

"Honey!" He hurried toward her when he saw her. "Where have you been?"

"Just a minute!" Evelyn raised one hand imperiously. "I have something you ought to hear, Stephen, before you rush to greet your fiancée."

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Stephen, who was walking toward Valerie, stopped in his tracks as though frozen.

"I don't believe," his sister went on, "that the young lady you call Louise Duphrane is Louise at all. If she is, let her prove it."

"Louise—what does she mean?" Stephen asked dully.

"I'm not Louise Duphrane," Valerie said quietly. "I'm Valerie Abbott. Thomas Dole hired me to marry Stephen so he could get the entire Elwell fortune. But I've done you one good turn, Stephen——"

"Oh! I——" Stephen clung to the back of a chair, his lips white, his eyes staring.

"Yes, I've found the real Louise Duphrane. I went over to Mr. Dole's this afternoon to tell him I couldn't go on with this thing. I found the girl imprisoned in the tower—with her crippled grandmother. Dole had hidden them there six months ago, when he found the girl was insane. Do you realize what that means, Stephen? It means that the entire Elwell fortune is yours without any strings attached, and Dole gets only what you see fit to give him.

"Now, if you don't mind, I'll go. Only please be sure that those two women are looked after, and that Dole is suitably punished. Good-by."

Valerie hurried up to her room. She had only her bag and gloves to get. In a moment, she was walking quietly down the back hall and into the garden.

She was curiously numb. Nothing mattered, now, nothing would ever matter again.

"Honey!" She heard Stephen call her as she stood—uncertain—bewildered—at the garden gate.

Wordless, she turned her tear-stained eyes in his direction.

"There's one thing I have to know," he went on eagerly, "were you pretending to love me, too?"

"No." Valerie shook her head sadly. "That's the hard part. I love you. I always will. That's why I went to see Dole. I had to play fair with you."

"Then, why are you runinng away, darling?" He rushed to her and caught her cold hands in his. "I love you, Louise—Valerie—Mary or Jane—I don't care what your name is."

"But—Clarice—Evelyn said——"

"Sweetheart, Evelyn telephoned me yesterday morning and said that she and you had agreed to have a big engagement celebration, and you wanted me to wait over and bring the gang up with me. Said she was sorry she'd been mean to you and that she's told you so. She also suggested that I bring a ring along with me. Darling, I waited to do those things because I thought you wanted me to. I was so happy. Now I know she lied—that she was mean to you."

"So that's why she drove down to the village yesterday? She wanted to telephone you," Valerie said softly.

"What did you say, dear?" Stephen pressed his lips to her cheek.

"Nothing." Sudden joy swept over her.

"We won't have to be married Wednesday, but I'd like to, darling, if it's all right with you. I'll give Evelyn the old house and enough money to live on, but she will have to get along without me from now on. Are you ready to marry me now, dear?"

"Yes, dearest, yes!"

"Then we'll start for the city, tonight." He kissed her hungrily and her lips clung to his. "We'll go in now and bid the others good-by," he went on after a long moment, "because our life alone—for each other—begins right now!"

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Corinne Carries On

By Conrad Charles Smith

WHEN Corinne Langley left Pinewood for New Orleans in February, she was as sure of her undying love for Leroy Peters as she was that he would not forget her. Under a pale moon and with a cold wind sweeping around them, they stood on the station platform, huddled in winter coats, and planned their future through all the years.

She had been in love with him since her fourteenth birthday, four years before. When they had saved a thousand dollars, they would be married. With her salary of ninety dollars a month in the city and Leroy's hundred and twenty-five from the Pinewood Bank, they were sure to reach their goal quickly.

"Why, honey, I'll be staying with my aunt, and I'll have scarcely no expense at all," she assured Leroy. "I should be able to put fifty dollars in the bank every month." She opened her bag and folded back the flap with the mirror to repair the damage caused by Leroy's last kiss. A slightly oval face with finely chiseled features and deep blue eyes stared back at her from the mirror.

Leroy frowned slightly.

"I don't like the idea of our getting married on your money," he said.

Corinne drew up a figure as good as anything the "Follies" could boast, in slim dignity.

"I like that!" she told him. "My money! Why it's almost the same as saying that we don't love each other, Leroy! Whatever one has belongs to both as long as we live! With two people who love as we do there can't be any 'my' money nor 'your' money!"

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"But——"

She placed a little gloved hand over his lips.

"Please, Leroy! Everything's got to be ours—always!"

The train, roaring up beside them, stopped further conversation. There was barely time for a hasty good-by kiss before her father and mother came out of the warm waiting room.

During the rest of February and all of March, Leroy's letters came as regularly as the morning light. Each day there would be a letter for her to read on the street car as she went to work. In April, Leroy missed writing several days, not all at once, but just by skipping days. June saw her getting only two letters a week from him and the last week in July only one came and that was very short.

She fussed a little in her letters to him about his failure to write often. He explained that his work in the bank was keeping him unusually busy. He was expecting a promotion soon. She was still very much in love with him. Each night before she went to bed, she kissed his photograph which adorned her dressing table.

Then on a certain Friday evening in August, a new interest in the person of a tall, bronzed young man walked into Matthews's cafeteria where she was cashier, and into her life. She saw the young man when he came in, and recognizing him instantly, wondered what he was doing in the city. What girl wouldn't have recognized him? Half the unmarried women in New Orleans were imagining themselves in love with him.

Only the week before one of his talking pictures had been the feature at New Orleans's newest, most expensive movie palace. It had been a picture of the South Sea Islands. Corinne had adored him in the picture. That, of course, accounted for the healthy coat of tan which covered his face and hands now. The picture had been made in the tropics.

Corinne watched him while he ate at a table out in the center of the room, and was terribly excited when he rose at last to come to her cashier's stand. Naturally, you can manage a smile for one of the screen's most famous actors. Corinne did—a warm friendly smile. Perhaps it was because of the smile that the young man leaned on the cigar case and said:

"It sure is good to be back in the States!" His gray eyes were inspecting her with a frank gaze.

Corinne flushed and knew she ought to say something.

"You—you didn't like the tropics?" She found words after long seconds.

He shook his head and smiled. His teeth were white, even, strong.

"It's not so bad in the evenings when the British band plays at the hotel and maybe some of the natives dance on the grounds." His gaze shifted away from her, went around the room, and came back. "Of course, it's not like the States. I never saw anything down there half as pretty as you are!"

"Oh!" It was half gasp, half exclamation.

He was smiling at her gravely.

"There's a good show on at the Strand," he suggested. "I wonder if you'd care to see it with me."

Corinne held her breath for an instant.

"I—I'd love to," she whispered.

He glanced at his watch.

"What time?" he asked.

"I'll be off in twenty minutes," she replied.

"Then I'll wait outside."

Corinne took an additional ten minutes, making thirty in all, powdering her nose and trying to get the most becoming shadings of rouge on her lips and face. A girl must endeavor to look her best when going out with a celebrity. It would be something to talk about for

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days to come. A date with Neil Norwood!

He was waiting when she came out. Her hand rested on his arm while her eyes swept the street in a quick glance. If only the girls in Pinewood could see her now!

They turned up the street.

"Did you know this is my lucky day?" he asked.

"Oh! Is it?" She wondered what he meant.

"I'll tell the world! First I find you! I knew right then I was lucky. I wouldn't ever have had the nerve to ask you for a date otherwise. I was just playing my hunch that luck was with me."

"Applesauce! And spread too thick!" She smiled up at him.

"Say, listen, you're hitting me like one of those tropical storms!"

They paused on a corner to wait for a traffic light. Perhaps, she thought, if he felt that way about her, there would be a chance for her on the screen. Certainly, he ought to know if a girl had beauty and charm, being associated as he was with the greatest movie actresses in the business.

The light came on. They crossed the street and in another moment were in the coolness and dimness of the Strand. An usher found them seats. She kept glancing at his lean, tanned face. There was something romantic about him, something that spoke of tropical lands, of gayly colored birds chattering in the trees, of native music under soft moons. It was easy to understand how screen fans had gone wild over him. The company that had him under contract had chosen well in the location for his latest picture, too. He belonged against a tropical background.

Her attention went to the actress on the screen. If that girl only had Neil playing opposite her, how much better she would be! Several moments passed in which Corinne's attention was wholly on the screen. She plucked at Neil's sleeve.

"Do you like these tropical pictures?" she asked.

"Yes, it's not so bad down there." He turned to smile at her. "At least, it wouldn't be if there were any girls like you there!"

"Now, listen—you can hardly expect me to believe that with all those beautiful actresses you see down there!"

"Yes, of course, we have shows there, too, but that's different."

"I—I thought you were simply splendid in 'Love on the Equator.'"

He stared at her with a puzzled frown on his face.

"Who do you think I am?" he demanded at last.

"Why—why, you're Neil Norwood, aren't you?"

He laughed.

"Not unless I just got out of a home for the feeble-minded! I've always thought my name was Bill Merrill! At least it always has been."

"But you said you were just back from the tropics!"

"Does that make me Neil Norwood? I've been in British Honduras, managing a banana plantation for a fruit company. No one ever accused me of being a movie actor before!"

"You look like him!"

"I hope not, but it isn't my fault if I do!"

She stared at him steadily. Her date was just a pick-up, she decided finally.

"I—I think I'd better go home!" She rose and made her way to the aisle.

"Oh, say, now!" He was behind her in the aisle. "Don't do that! I'm not to blame, you know."

She strode on out of the theater. Her head was as stiff as though it had been carved of marble.

"If you must do that, let me call a taxi." He was beside her in the entrance.

A taxi was discharging its load at the

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"There's a good show on at the Strand," he suggested. "I wonder if you'd care to see it with me."

curb. He hailed it. She tried to turn away, but his hand caught her arm.

"I'm very sorry. Really, I am!" His voice was pleading.

The ticket girl in the glass cage and two or three people on the street were staring at them curiously. Corinne hated scenes. She glanced ever so briefly at Bill Merrill. He looked like a rather nice young man in spite of the fact that he was not Neil Norwood. She got into the taxi, and gave the driver her address. Bill Merrill was in beside her instantly. She had intended to close the door before he could enter, but he was too quick for that.

The taxi pulled away from the curb.

"I had to come with you and explain," Bill Merrill was saying. "I was puzzled when you smiled at me in the cafeteria. I'm not one of those fresh guys who's always trying to pick up girls."

"Yes, you would say it was all my fault!" She kept her eyes straight ahead.

"To be honest, the idea flashed through my mind that you thought you knew me. It was my good luck, the way I saw it. I thought perhaps you wouldn't be too hard on me when you learned you were mistaken. I didn't even for one instant get the idea you were a girl a fellow could just pick up!"

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She let her eyes rest on him in a quick glance. The taxi moved smoothly over the pavement. Central America! That accounted for the air of the tropics about him. And he was not altogether to blame for the situation. She had smiled at him.

"Please, let's not quarrel because I'm not Neil Norwood," he was pleading again. "I liked you as soon as I saw you, and of course I didn't know you had me mixed up with him."

"But you just admitted you knew I was mistaken in you!" A faint smile twisted the corners of her mouth.

He was quick to recognize his advantage and press it.

"Maybe you don't know what it is to be away from home for a year down there among those natives. A fellow gets lonesome, I'll tell you, and—and girl-hungry!"

"I see! You were looking for just any girl who'd let you pick her up!" She couldn't quite hold all the smile out of her eyes.

He scratched his head and smiled back at her wryly.

"Great Scott, but you're quick to twist a fellow's meaning around! I wasn't looking for just any girl! I was looking for you! I've still got two weeks of my vacation left. After you agreed to go to the show with me, I was hoping we'd go other places, do things together."

"Were you?" There was downright hostility in her voice now.

"Don't get me wrong—please." His hand sought hers lying on the seat. "I meant the right kind of things, things your mother could approve of. Didn't I tell you I knew you weren't the kind of girl a fellow could pick up?"

A little wave of pity for him ran over her. He was rather nice. She could understand something of his hunger for things American. It must be pretty bad down there in the tropics for a whole year at a time—no American girls, none of his own kind, nothing but natives and banana plantations. Of course, he was girl-hungry, anxious to make the most of his vacation. It would be an act of charity to help him have a good time during the next two weeks, since he didn't seem to know any girls in the city. Leroy wouldn't mind, of course.

"What kind of things were you thinking of doing?" she asked him.

"Dancing, dinners, riding, swimming, anything you'd want to do." His face lighted up swiftly. "Would you? It would be wonderful after a year down in Honduras to find you and have you be nice to me!" His eyes were studying her face. He leaned over and spoke to the driver: "Turn around and go back."

The driver frowned.

"Back where?" he wanted to know.

"Back to Canal Street! Anywhere! Just keep driving!"

Corinne smiled at him and his eagerness. It was a shame that such a nice young man didn't have a sweetheart. The least she could do would be to help him enjoy his vacation. It would really be social-service work.

The taxi circled the block, and put them down finally on Canal Street. They went to another show, and began to discover things about each other. After the show, there was dancing on a smooth floor with music that seemed to speak of tropical lands. He seemed to know his way around in the city. Once while they were dancing, he held her close and said:

"Honduras was never like this!"

She learned that he had been in Central America for three years. He hadn't known many girls even before he had gone down there, he explained to her, and now he was out of touch with the few he had known. It was pretty tough, not knowing any girls when you came home on your vacation. A fellow needed girls, nice girls, like her to keep him from going downhill.

Before they had finished dancing, he had dates with her for a week ahead.

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She kept telling herself that it was not being disloyal to Leroy.

Twelve days passed, which is not such a considerable period of time; but a lot can be accomplished by an enterprising young man from Central America in twelve days. They went to the right places and did the right things as he had promised. Corinne had a wonderful time along with the charitable work she was doing. Of course, she wasn't becoming interested in him except in anything but an impersonal way. How could she when she was still in love with Leroy?

If she had met him before she had known Leroy there might have been a chance of her falling in love with him. Almost any heart-free girl would be intrigued by him.

On the third Friday evening, Bill came to her aunt's home for her in a smart, new roadster, and Corinne wondered if he had bought it. Surely not, she decided. He was sailing Sunday morning. He would hardly buy a car to use for two days, in spite of the fact that he seemed to have plenty of money to spend.

He did not offer to stop at any of the shows or night clubs downtown, but drove on out till they found a little-used country road. His thoughts seemed to be on the tropics. He kept talking of Honduras, telling her of things down there. The roadster was throttled to a snail's pace, and he drove with one hand.

"Maybe it's only been a bit of fun for you," he said at last. "Anyway, I've got to know. I haven't been crazy enough to dream dreams of your marrying me and going back to the tropics with me. I reckon it would be getting too close to heaven to have you feel that way about me. But I couldn't help falling in love with you the way I did, and I had to tell you!"

She sat for a moment in stunned silence. The roadster purred smoothly on.

"Oh! Oh, Bill, I didn't intend to let anything like this happen! I—I'm sorry—truly, I am. I was just trying to help you enjoy your vacation."

He smiled grimly.

"Yes, I understand. I'm not blaming you. Except for being the prettiest and nicest girl I've ever known, you haven't given me any excuse for falling in love with you. You've made it clear you were only helping me spend my vacation. That's why I said I hadn't been crazy enough to dream any dreams. But love never gives us any idea of where we're going till we've arrived. It was like that with me."

She stole sidelong glances at his face. It was twisted with pain. Perhaps it would help if she told him about Leroy. It wasn't that Bill didn't measure up to her standards. He was, with his romantic air of the tropics and his tanned leanness, very intriguing. But there was Leroy to consider. Her fingers rested lightly on Bill's sleeve.

"I'm terribly sorry, Bill. If you really love me, I can understand how you feel—all queer and shaky inside."

He turned his head to glance at her.

"Can you?" he asked.

She nodded.

"I'm in love, too, Bill. I've been in love since the day I was fourteen! And, Bill, I'm just an ordinary sort of person. Leroy, the man I love, knows me better than you do. He can see through me, can understand me."

They drove back to her aunt's home. Corinne let him kiss her good night. After all the heartache she was causing him, she thought it was little enough to be as kind to him as she could.

On Saturday evening they went to a night club and danced. The band played music that made her heart ache. The evening was colored with a faint sorrow that she had not met Bill before she had known Leroy. It would be their last night together. There was something vaguely disquieting in the thought.

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They took quite more time over their leave taking that night. Corinne was sorry for him. She wanted to say something that would help him to bear up under the strain of his broken heart.

"You understand, don't you, Bill?" she asked for perhaps the tenth time that evening. "You know I couldn't care for any one but Leroy? You'll soon forget me and be happy again!"

"Never!" Bill told her. "I'll be loving you as much ten years from to-night as I do now! I'm going to send you a cablegram every day to let you know I'm thinking of you. Perhaps you'll forget this Leroy some day."

She shook her head.

"Bill, it—it isn't like that! And you mustn't send me cablegrams."

Of course she kissed him when he finally said good-by. Bill was such a clean, likable sort. He understood everything, too.

She went up to her room, undressed, and laid down on her bed. Sleep refused to come. She kept thinking of Bill, of hot, steaming nights in the tropics with only natives around him and his heart aching for her. What a pity that of all the girls in the world he should love her, who could not possibly care for him because she was already in love!

Some day he would forget her and love another girl. That thought hurt. She sat up in bed. She didn't want Bill to love another girl. Bill was hers! She began trying to analyze her feeling for him. To-morrow he would be gone from her life forever. There was something poignantly bitter in that. She didn't want him to go out of her life.

She slept fitfully at last, only to dream of crowds of pretty girls pursuing Bill to his ship and sailing with him, following him to Honduras.

When she awoke at last there was a vague doubt of her love for Leroy in her mind. It didn't seem possible that she could feel as she did about Bill if she were still in love with Leroy. But loving Leroy was something not easily put aside. It had become a habit, like powdering her nose. It was hard to get away from.

There was a letter from Leroy that morning:

> CORINNE DEAR: I know you've been wondering why I haven't written but once this week. You're a mighty sweet kid to have so much patience with me, but really, dear, I'm terribly busy these days. A lot of the officials' work is falling on my shoulders. My bank account is steadily growing, and I'm looking for an increase in salary almost any month. When that comes—well, you know the rest.
>
> And that reminds me, I've had only two letters from you the past week. Is there some fellow down there keeping you so busy you don't have time to write to me?

The last sentence left a pang of remorse in her heart. Leroy was slaving away in the bank and pinching pennies trying to make their bank account grow while she was running around in the city with Bill. She went back to her room to get her savings deposit book. The last entry was in May, and the balance was forty dollars. She was surprised at the smallness of the amount and the length of time since she had made a deposit. She sighed. In the city a girl had to have clothes and spending money.

All through the day thoughts of Leroy and her disloyalty to him worried her. A dozen time she resolved to stay strictly at home and save every penny of her salary during the next month. Of course, there would have to be carfare, and she would need stockings and another pair of shoes.

At six o'clock while she sat on the porch, Bill came up the walk that led from her aunt's porch to the street. She met him at the steps.

"My boat isn't sailing till to-morrow, after all," Bill told her. "It's taken me all day to learn that."

"Bill, I can't see you this evening! It—it isn't fair to Leroy!" She glanced down the street away from him.

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He came up on the porch to her anyway. And they sat in the swing on the porch and discussed almost everything except the question that lay nearest both their hearts. She knew now it was rank disloyalty to Leroy to be sitting there beside bill, but it was Bill's last chance to see her. She consoled herself with the thought that Leroy wouldn't mind. Bill, somehow, seemed nearer and dearer to her than Leroy. It was a feeling she had been fighting against all day.

There was no moon, but the street lights came on and left the porch in a pleasant dimness. Inside the house, her aunt had turned on the radio, and some golden-voiced tenor was singing love songs. Bill's eyes kept telling her he loved her, while his lips formed words that did not matter. To know Bill loved her left a warm glow in her heart that even thoughts of Leroy could not dampen. Leroy seemed rather a dull sort of person when she stood him up in her thoughts beside Bill.

"But you must forget me! Don't you understand, Bill, that I'm going to marry Leroy?"

"About those cablegrams, Bill," she said. "You really mustn't send them. Leroy wouldn't like that!"

"It doesn't matter to me what he likes. It's only you I'm considering! I should worry about him!"

"I'd rather you wouldn't. It will be best to put me entirely out of your thoughts."

His arm lying along the back of the swing dropped down on her shoulders.

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"I'll never forget you!" he whispered.

"But you must! Don't you understand, Bill, that I'm going to marry Leroy?"

"You've told me that you were," he admitted.

She caught her breath sharply. He didn't believe it. She was glad. Abruptly, the realization came to her that she was in love with Bill. Leroy didn't matter. He seemed like something that had gone forever, just a passed phase of her life, like the dolls she had played with as a little girl.

She could feel the muscles of Bill's arm tighten as he drew her irresistibly to him. His head bent slowly toward hers.

"Anyway, there's always going to be this for us to remember," he told her. His lips closed down upon hers in a long kiss.

"Oh, Bill! You mustn't!" She struggled free from his arms at last.

He rose slowly and strode over to the steps.

"I'll never forget!" he promised.

She sat there for a long time after he had gone, trying to piece things together. Life was playing queer tricks on her. Fifteen days before, Leroy had seemed as much a necessary part of her life as the sleep that came to her each night. That evening all the little cross currents of desire that had at times left her restless and doubtful had met in a single channel of emotion. She knew that the tall form she had watched stride down the walk to the street represented to her all in life that was worth living for.

She would try all of her life to make Leroy happy. Perhaps in time she would even learn to love him all over again. Bill would forget her. He wasn't the type that would remember any girl long. He would be off in foreign lands, adventuring in love with pretty girls, just as he done with her. That was a line of reasoning and resolve that left her only the more miserable.

On Wednesday morning there was a radiogram for her:

AT SEA.
S. S. VENTURA.
JUST TO REMIND YOU I'LL NEVER FORGET. BILL.

She folded it neatly and put it in her bag. It didn't help at all.

Each day thereafter a message came from him. One read:

ANY TIME YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND, CABLE ME COLLECT.

Another asked:

WON'T YOU PLEASE WRITE TO ME?

A third remarked:

LAST NIGHT, THE BAND PLAYED "LOUISIANA MOON," AND DID IT MAKE ME LONELY FOR THE STATES AND YOU!

That one almost overcame her firm resolve not to write to him, and left a vague ache in her heart that remained with her for days. But she didn't write to him. She kept trying to push thoughts of him from her mind.

Interspersed with Bill's cablegrams, there came a letter from a girl she had chummed with in Pinewood. One sentence remained in her memory steadfastly:

Leroy is seeing quite a lot of Viola Winters. I knew you'd want to know that. Guess he's getting lonesome for you.

Leroy forgot to mention Viola in either of his letters that week. Corinne didn't blame him for that nor for seeing a lot of Viola. He was lonely, of course.

A month passed. She wrote Leroy every day and tried to keep her thoughts away from Bill. She was not very successful in the latter. Bill's face had a

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way of floating before her mind's eye at little moments of the day. It seemed to be something over which she had no control.

The days dragged interminably. She went often to the theater where Bill had taken her that first evening. There was a faint pleasure tinged with sorrow in going places where Bill had taken her. Two words that had been used a lot during the war caught her mind: "Carry on!" She would have to do just that.

Then came a letter from her mother, more or less the usual letter with news from Pinewood; but there was one paragraph, the very last one, that left her weak and breathless.

And, Corinne, I know you'll be interested when I tell you that Leroy Peters and Viola Winters were married three days ago. They've bought the little cottage on Fourth Street that was built for the Pattersons, and will live there when they get back from their honeymoon.

Interested? Yes, a condemned person was usually interested in a pardon. Her cable to Bill read:

SOMETIMES GIRLS DO CHANGE THEIR MINDS. HOW SOON CAN YOU GET HERE?

Bill's answer was:

HOT DOG! TO-DAY'S PLANE LEAVES IN AN HOUR! I'LL BE ON IT SHOUTING SO LOUD YOU CAN HEAR ME UP THERE IN THE STATES IF YOU'LL LISTEN!

The next evening when she went in from work, he was waiting for her at her aunt's home. Her aunt was shocked when Bill gathered Corinne into his arms on the front porch, but neither Corinne nor Bill seemed to mind that. And as she lifted up her lips to his, she knew that sooner or later things come right for those who carry on as best they can.

"Honey, I've a confession to make," Bill told her when they were finally inside the house. "I know plenty of girls right here in the city. My father and mother and sister live here. I wasn't girl-hungry at all. There are even a lot of girls down in Central America, but I didn't want any of them. I wanted you. I knew that the moment I saw you." He paused to smile a little. "But, darling, I met the stiffest sales resistance I ever encountered when I tried to sell myself to you."

She nestled deep in his arms.

"No, you didn't, Bill, honey. You only thought you did. In spite of my being engaged to Leroy, I was in love with you right from the first!"

Her arms tightened about his neck to pull his lips down to hers again. His kiss thrilled with a fire that she couldn't resist. All her heart was crying anew that she loved him, that only in him could she ever find the answer to her dreams.

"Dearest, dearest!" he whispered, holding her close. "I've wanted you so—missed you so. We'll always be together now, for I'll never stop loving you, never let you go!"

As his lips met hers once again, Corinne knew that only on those conditions could she be happy—if Bill never stopped loving her, if he never let her go!

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Singing Winds

By Dorothy Lull

NANCY leaned from the cockpit of the *Jenny Lind* and scanned the ground below, the rudder bar dangling useless beneath her feet. The vertical control cable had snapped. She could turn neither right nor left, only move forward in a deadly straight line, hoping to find a place to land.

Her breath caught. Beneath her, splintered peaks, strange canyons rose and fell like wind-torn waves. Somewhere ahead where the sun smoldered above the grim horizon lay Mexico. Behind her was Texas and Gilbert Revaux.

She wondered that she had no fear, only this curious calm. Soon Gilbert and her mother would begin to look for her. The rehearsal was to be at eight, the wedding to-morrow at noon. They would look for her, but they would not find her. They would think she had run away. Somewhere in one of those shadowed ravines there would be a shattered plane, bones whitening, but they would think she had run away! She squared her quivering chin.

As the stricken plane hammered across the June sky, she seemed to hear her mother talking:

"It's perfect madness—going up the very day before the wedding! You know how Gil feels about your flying."

"I've promised to give it up, haven't I?" Nancy could see herself buttoning her shabby leather jacket. "It won't hurt him—this last time. Anyway, I'm going."

Next it was Billings at the flying field.

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"Not going up in that old bus of yours, are you? Mr. Revaux told me to put it in shape to sell."

So Gil had done that! The only thing she really owned—this secondhand plane she had bought with her own money—he was already planning to sell! To-morrow he would have the right, but now it was still hers. She would have one last flight; no one could stop her.

She had taxied across the field, waving to the irritated Billings. The feel of the upper air had soothed her as it always did. She was free, unafraid, one with the singing wind.

Why had she let her mother bully her into marrying Gilbert? Why hadn't she insisted on going to work after her father's death? As the plane nosed into the west it all seemed so futile—her mother's extravagance, their increasing dependence on Gilbert's generosity.

"Work? Why, you talk like a baby!" Once more Nancy seemed to hear her mother's voice above the drone of the motor—velvety, like a cat's paw. "Ever since you were sixteen Gil's been mad about you—why, Heaven only knows, with all his sophistication and experience. Of course you'll marry him, and there isn't a woman in town who won't envy you."

And Nancy had dreamed shyly of marriage as an exultant, shining thing, a gay gamble that challenged the heart like the wind singing in the rigging of her plane. Gilbert was old, as old as her mother. He had come from Virginia to join her father in business as his junior partner. After her father's long illness and death, her mother had mortgaged their interest in the firm until everything belonged to Gilbert; yet he had insisted on their accepting their usual income.

"There's only one way you can repay me," Gil had said. "You know I want you to marry me."

Gil's eyes, blue beneath blond brows, his smile that twitched his graying mustache, seemed to look out at her from the scurrying clouds. Her mother, youthful, dainty, and hard like a frozen flower, floated beside him.

Nancy never knew just when the cable had broken. Now her throat contracted in a sob. Well, she would never marry Gil now! She had meant to go back, but now she couldn't! A fierce exultation swept her. She had given in like a coward to her mother, but now she was free. She felt light, unreal. At last she was free. Her eyes narrowed as she faced the sunset. She would slip through those flaming spokes of gold, drop down into the cool bank of the horizon.

Her fingers tightened on the control. Far ahead, she could see a flat-topped mountain rising like a headless giant. Instinctively she shoved the stick forward. The plane nosed earthward until she could see the level of a plateau. She throttled down for a glide. She would never make it in such a deadly straight line, but it was her only chance. Her lips set. With a jar one wheel struck the ground. The ship bounded, then skidded on one wing to a standstill.

For a moment she sat limp, staring across the endless reach of level tableland that stretched on all sides as far as she could see. She climbed stiffly from the cockpit, and wiped the tears from her face. She must have been crying up there, though, strangely, she didn't remember.

She walked around the plane. It was all right. Billings would never believe it when she told him, but nothing had cracked. The cable controlling the vertical rudder would need a mechanic, however.

The only sign of life was an eagle, a black speck against the opalescent sky. There might be some village near, Nancy thought. She looked helplessly about for something to which she could tie the plane down. The ground was bare except for stray clumps of wild cactus. She started across the plateau, a slim,

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boyish figure in her khaki suit, like a pigmy against the mountain solitude.

She plodded on through the afterglow of the June sunset, buttoning her coat against the chill wind. Where was she? Blinded by her own thoughts, where had she flown before that cable snapped?

Suddenly she stopped at the edge of a shadowed gorge. Beyond the nest of intervening peaks rose a second plateau with a miniature village clinging to its nearer slope. How could she reach it? She stared through her binoculars at the ravines, trackless, impassable, that lay between her and those friendly roofs. With a start of fear she dropped behind a spur of rock.

About a hundred yards below where she stood, a lone figure moved along a narrow trail that twisted across the face of the cliff—a man with a pack on his back. He had stopped by a trickling spring, evidently to make camp for the night, and he stood now staring across the gorge to the distant village, his lean, sinewy figure relaxed.

She was just on the point of calling to him, when she saw something stir far down the path along which he had just come. Her fingers tightened on the binoculars as she made out the figure of a second man lying face down on a ledge overlooking an elbow of the trail a mile away. Clearly in the powerful glass she saw him rise cautiously to his knee, signal as if to some one behind him, and slide furtively into the shadows beyond the bend. Unreasoning fear gripped her. Stealthy forms seemed to peer out from the deepening twilight. A weird cry broke the stillness, echoing along the canyon walls. A gray shape darted past her. With a sob of terror she plunged down the rocky slope.

"What——"

The man whirled from his camp fire. Nancy stared down at the muzzle of a revolver. She swayed uncertainly, steadying herself against a boulder. She hoped she wasn't going to faint.

"I—I—beg—your pardon——" she began, but her knees gave way. She crumpled to the path.

Something scorched her tongue. She opened her eyes. The man bent over her, supporting her head on one knee as he forced the mouth of a bottle between her lips.

"Why—why did you—shoot me?" She sat up weakly, pushing the bottle aside.

"Good heavens, I didn't shoot you!" He grinned down at her, his lean, dark face puckered whimsically. "I thought you were somebody else; that's all! You see, I didn't expect you. It was stupid of me, wasn't it?"

"Oh!" She regarded him. "I—I was sorry I hadn't tried the other one—back there on the rock."

"Who? What rock? What do you mean?"

She explained, dazed by his abrupt change. His eyes, gray beneath straight black brows, searched the mountainside as he listened, every muscle tense.

"I see." His curt nod cut her short. With a catlike spring he vaulted to a shoulder of rock overhanging the path and stood motionless, outlined against the darkening sky.

"Well, they haven't made a fire." He dropped back. "They aren't taking any chances." He began pouring coffee from a blackened pot which he had taken from his own fire, a ruddy blaze between two flat stones. "Drink this. You'll feel better."

She could feel him studying her as he slapped bacon into a sizzling pan, pried open a can of beans, fumbled with tin dishes. Who was he? Why was that man following him? The pungent tang of the bacon rose on the clear air. She felt giddy. Vaguely she realized that she had not eaten since breakfast. Obediently she sipped the strong coffee. And then she told him the whole story of her escape on the plane.

"So your control cable broke," he said

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coolly, his eyes meeting hers across his tin cup, as she finished. "You left your bridegroom high and dry the day before the wedding!"

She winced at the reference to Gilbert. Her pinched, childish face must have touched him, for he went on more gently:

"Don't worry! I've got some wire; I'll go up and see if I can't patch it up. Don't move from this fire. Remember, everything's going to be all right."

"You—you're awfully kind." Nancy looked up at him, her fingers interlaced about her khaki-clad knees. Her leather jacket revealed a V of white throat. "I—I don't know how I can—thank you."

He measured her between narrowed lids—the heart-shaped face, the gay tilted nose sprinkled with freckles, the soft red lips.

"Don't you?" He laughed abruptly, and then disappeared up the steep slope into the night.

She waited where he had left her, her pulse still leaping at the memory of his eyes. Why had he looked at her like that? What did he mean? A sense of her utter helplessness overwhelmed her. Far across the valley the village lights twinkled like a spray of fallen stars. Above, the sky stretched in a glittering ribbon between bare mountain crests. Who was he? Again he could see that lean, arrogant profile, the straight, black hair, high cheek bones, the grim line of the mouth that could pucker so unexpectedly into a boyish grin, the gray, flickering eyes that whipped the blood to her cheeks.

Suppose he were a criminal, escaping from the authorities? Suppose even now he was stealing her plane, leaving her stranded, helpless? She jumped to her feet, shivering. Somewhere in the darkness a pebble crunched beneath heavy boots.

"All right! Did I scare you?" He emerged from the shadows. Well, I did it! I spliced that cable so you can make it to Hermosillo, anyway. You can take off at dawn. You'd better lie on this." He pushed a canvas roll toward her. "Pull that blanket around you."

"But—I'm going now. The moon's clear. I—I can make it."

"Sit down," he ordered sharply. "You don't suppose I want to keep you here any longer than is absolutely necessary, do you? You'll get yourself killed if you try it now. Do as I tell you. If you're cold, put on that slicker. I'll wake you when it's time to get up." He bent over a paper spread on one knee, his lean face furrowed.

She watched him. For some reason he wanted to get rid of her; that was plain. The reaction from the last two hours left her shaking as if with a chill. Suddenly she felt that she must break that creeping silence. She raised herself on one elbow.

"Why—why was that man watching you from that rock?"

"Why don't you go to sleep?"

"I—I—can't." She looked up at him, her chin cupped in one palm. She blinked back the tears. "It's all—so—queer."

He hesitated for a moment, then shoved the paper in his pocket and skirted the fire to drop beside her.

"You poor little kid! Warm enough?" He tucked the blanket about her shoulders as she sat up. "How in the world that fiancé of yours ever let you wander off like this by yourself—— If I had a girl like you——"

She glanced up surreptitiously at the strong profile as his words trailed into silence. Just what would he do? She wondered shyly.

"I'd go with her!" Unexpectedly his eyes caught hers. "I wouldn't run any risks of losing her."

She stared at the fire, conscious of the surge of color his terse words had brought into her face. She struggled against the silence, warm now, tingling.

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"You—you haven't told me yet—why that man was watching you," she said, her voice strained in its attempt at casualness.

She felt him straighten his shoulders with a deep breath. Abruptly he stood up, pacing to and fro in the firelight. When next he dropped beside her his mood had changed.

"See that dot?" He indicated a speck on the paper which he had once more spread out on his knee. "That's about where we are now. You see, this is a map of the wall of the valley. See that red circle?"

She nodded.

"That's the opening of the Tiopa—the most famous of the lost mines of Mexico. I located it with glasses from the mission over there." He waved toward the far village lights.

"Mexico! This is Mexico—here?"

"Good heavens, didn't you know? This is the State of Chihuahua, near the Sonora boundary line. You evidently came over the border at Sierra Blanca. You're nearly four hundred miles from home."

"Oh!" The enormity of his statement affected her less than the wonder of the thing that was happening to her. Adventure and romance were hers for that one night. Later, perhaps, she would go back to Gil, but now.

"Go on—tell me." She leaned toward him, her breath quickening. "If it's a lost mine, how can it be there?" She tapped the map with a forefinger. Her

"All right, Rick! Stick 'em up!" The barrel of a gun suddenly appeared, followed by a man's face—a leering, wrinkled face, a scar over one eye.

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dimple flickered as her lips parted eagerly.

He looked down at her for a moment before he went on in swift, curt sentences. He had come to Mexico to build a railroad three years before. Just as it was about half finished a revolution had wiped it out and the money bags were stolen from the paymaster's shack. The municipalities which had raised the funds held him responsible and threw him in jail.

"But it wasn't your fault. How could they blame you?"

"Who was to prove I didn't have it staked out somewhere?" He smiled at her indignation, the lines about his gray eyes deepening. "They weren't as trusting as you! While I was in jail at Estrella, a half-breed Indian in the same cell showed me an old map that gave the location of this Tiopa. The legend was that the Indians hid it from the Spanish invaders. A note on the margin said the opening could be seen only from the door of the mission church; there's a certain irony in that! As soon as I got out on bond I made for the mission, but a fellow named Lascalle got wind of it and the map disappeared."

"And then," she prompted, edging closer, "you found the opening?"

"The opening! You could see a dozen from that door! Lascalle was there, too, so I knew he'd made off with the map. For six months I combed that mountainside, going over old dumps, but it looked like a hoax. Then last week I left Lascalle's crowd still at it, and dropped down to Estrella where I heard a wall of the church had crumbled, uncovering an old door facing this range. I made tracks for it, and there I saw that"—he rapped the red circle—"the only opening visible from that angle. It's here, somewhere near where we are now or all my measurements are off."

"That man I saw?"

"Probably Lascalle. He evidently got suspicious when he found I'd gone up here, and trailed me. I'd hoped to get it all sewed up before he got wise. Well, if you're not sleepy now, you ought to be!"

"But who is he? If you find it, it will be yours, won't it?"

"It belongs to the man who reports it first to the board of mines—files his claim to it, they'd call it in the States. And Lascalle"—he yawned behind his hand—"is just low enough to wait till he's sure I've located it and then manage to delay my return until he's nabbed it for himself."

"But the law—couldn't you report him?"

"Not Lascalle. He knows I know he stole those money bags; he was the one who reported in Estrella that they'd been taken before I knew it myself. But all I had was a hunch. He's a slick customer; nobody knows where he came from. He's not a Mexican, but he's been hanging around here, they say, for thirty years. He's a bad actor, and when I own the Tiopa and pay off that money they hold me for, I'm going to make it warm for him."

"Is that why you're anxious for me to go—because of him?" she said, breaking the long silence.

"That's one reason." He tossed brush on the fire. His eyes met hers across the darting flames. "You'd better try and get some sleep now. I'm going over my figures once more before I turn in. Good night."

"Good night——" she hesitated.

"Brewster," he supplied, reading her thought with a surety that quickened her pulse. "Frederick Clay Brewster, known familiarly as Rick. Under the circumstances, it would be quite proper for you to call me Rick."

The ironic lift of his lips, the flickering eyes stirred hidden chords within her. Her lids drooped, the red-gold lashes in crescent shadows against her childish cheeks as she felt him draw nearer.

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"I talked like a fool to-night, but it goes to a fellow's head—finding a real girl after three years. How's that for a pillow?" He slid the canvas roll under her head. "There—are you warm enough? I'll wake you in time. Now just forget Lascalle—and everything. Good night."

The touch of his hands filled her with an odd quiet, as if, somehow, she had been living always for that moment, as if those lean shoulders had always been there, braced to shield her from the wind, those steady fingers to tuck her in against the cold. She watched him beneath her lashes as he sat hunched over the map, the firelight etching his face in shadow. There was something gallant and debonair about him, despite the patch on his sheepskin coat and his worn leather puttees. Gilbert would call him a jail bird, a cheap adventurer, but Gilbert didn't understand.

Nancy did. If only she had some thread, she would mend that place in the armhole of his coat. She smiled wistfully as she drifted off to sleep.

A coyote's cry echoed down the canyon. "Rick" Brewster sat with his arms folded, his eyes on the face of the sleeping girl. From time to time he threw fresh wood on the fire.

A mile down the trail another man was kindling a fire.

"Nothing doing till he's got the goods—then plug him! By the time anybody finds him nothing will be left to show bullet holes. Understand?"

Muttered gutturals came sleepily from the shadows. Lascalle's men understood thoroughly.

To Nancy it seemed only a few minutes since she had watched Brewster's head outlined against the night sky before she felt him shaking her briskly.

"Here, drink this coffee! It's only four o'clock, but by the time you make it to the top, it'll be light enough to take off."

She stared about dazedly. The stars were white. A cloud lay below the ledge in the canyon, like a torn white veil. She shivered.

"We haven't any time to lose. Make straight for Hermosillo. You've got enough fuel for that. Wire your folks from there, and have the mechanic check up on that rudder cable. Why they ever let you go up in a bunch of junk like that——"

"It's not junk—that's a Curtis OX-5 motor."

"All right; I take it all back; it's a wonder. But drink that coffee. Make it snappy."

It was rather pleasant, having him browbeat her. She looked up as she knelt by the spring, washing her face in the icy water. She met his eyes. Her own lowered before his gaze.

"Got enough money?" Now he was brushing off the clinging pebbles from her clothes with his hands. "Five dollars isn't enough. Take this." He counted four bills from a thin folder.

"Why not let me wait till you find that opening? Then you could come with me." She caught his arm, suddenly breathless with the daring of her plan. "You could file your claim and get away from Lascalle. Don't you see?"

"Let you run the risk of his finding you here while I locate the claim? Nothing doing!" He put the bills in her hand. "Now beat it up that slope, the way you came down last night." He did not move. "This fellow Gilbert—he's the real thing, I take it?" He spoke slowly, as if to himself rather than to her. "You love him, don't you?"

She moistened her dry lips.

"Why—why do you ask?"

"A girl like you doesn't marry a man unless she loves him. Well, good-by. I've got to stay here and cover the trail in case Lascalle——"

"But how will I see you again and repay you—the money and everything?"

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Tears crowded behind her eyes. His fingers tightened over hers, during a moment of silence.

"You don't owe me anything—now," he murmured softly.

She felt his arms about her, drawing her close, his lips upon hers in a kiss that was at once ecstasy and pain. For a flaming moment he held her, her heart lifting to his, pliant, helpless.

"There—run along, sweet, before I——" He pushed her up the slope. "Hurry. That's it."

She stumbled blindly over the rocks. He could kiss her like that, and then send her away! It meant nothing to him. She was just the first American girl he had seen in three years. She lifted her hand to brush the tears from her eyes. Her foot slipped. She clutched a bush which uprooted beneath her weight; then plunged backward into space.

He caught her as she staggered on the edge of the path that dropped off into the canyon below. "All right?" he asked tenderly. Then, raising his eyes from her pinched face, he caught his breath. "Look at that!"

He was staring past her to a dark gap in the face of a cliff above where they stood, exposed now by the uprooted bush.

"That's it!" He rushed toward it, pulling her beside him. "That bulge above the path threw me off. I couldn't see it before from where we were. There are the old steps!"

She followed his pointing finger. Below the opening, rough hewn stones led, ladderlike, down the inner face of the rock. In the moment's silence she heard the spatter of falling pebbles.

"Look out!"

His arm thrust her downward. He dropped beside her, steadying her as she reeled against the cavern wall.

"Somebody back there—at the bend of the trail." His whisper was against her ear. "Move back—that's it—in the shadow, but be careful. There may be a shaft."

They were in an abandoned tunnel, its entrance partially closed by a stone barricade leaving only the upper section open, like a crude transom. As though in a dream, Nancy stared at the black walls that dripped with moisture. Vaguely she realized that Rick Brewster had crawled back to the opening.

"Not a thing in sight," he reported a few seconds later. "I know I saw a man. What a fool I've been! I can't let you go up now, and yet you can't stay here. To think I got you into a thing like this!"

"Now you'll have to go with me—as soon as you're sure of this!" She nodded toward the surrounding dark, hoping he would not hear her teeth chattering.

"You're game, anyway!" He patted her shoulder as he walked by, flashing his lantern in circles. "Don't worry. We'll make it, somehow."

Something deep within her seemed to swell with pride. He had called her game! She stiffened her shaking lips.

He was prowling about, pantherlike, his long form bent. She saw him kneel, and light a tiny fire around a heap of small stones he had collected. Swiftly he grew rigid. She never forgot the light in his lifted face.

"Look!" His whisper pricked the silence. His unsteady finger pointed to glistening drops like quicksilver beneath the embers. "It's silver—solid silver!" He touched the bits of ore. "The Tiopa—we've found it!"

The cactus that framed the distant opening swayed. Rick sprang to the shadow, scattering the red ashes with his foot. She felt him thrust something into her hand. A pistol! She shivered. Meanwhile he had slid forward, flattened against the wall, his eyes on that swaying cactus.

"All right, Rick! Stick 'em up!"

The barrel of a gun suddenly ap-

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peared from the opposite corner of the opening, followed by a man's face—a leering, wrinkled face, a scar over one eye.

"You win, Lascalle." Rick wheeled about with a shrug.

He had said that if they caught him he would try and lead them off, so that she would have a chance to get away unseen. Watching the flaming hate in Lascalle's face, suddenly Nancy knew they would kill Rick. In that moment all fear left her. The spirit of some pioneer forbear entered into her. She raised the pistol Rick had given her. There was a flash, a sharp report, the smell of powder smoke, and suddenly Rick was beside her again, pulling her farther back into the tunnel.

"D-d-did I h-hit him?"

"It went over his head, but he ran like a rabbit! That was a lucky break! Good girl!"

She thrilled to his hand on her shoulder. Side by side, behind a barricade of stones, they watched the entrance through long hours. Somewhere outside they could hear men talking, voices muffled, indistinct. From time to time a head showed; the cactus swayed. Rick's gun spat flame. Then there was silence again.

"All right?" His hand covered hers reassuringly. "What a fool I was to get you into a jam like this! If it were any one but Lascalle I'd throw him the whole works, if he'd let you by—but he's such a dog."

"Sh! I'm all right."

He pulled his sheepskin coat about her. She could feel his shoulder braced against her. She felt curiously calm. The lantern, midway down the tunnel, left them in shadow, yet illumined the opening, veiled now in the approaching night. What were those men out there planning now? How could two hold out against so many? There seemed, from the voices, to be at least four or five of them. Rick had only three more cartridges. When they were gone what would happen?

Yet Nancy could feel no fear, only a certain fierce satisfaction, as if at last she were where she had always longed to be—fighting side by side with her man.

In muffled whispers Rick worked out his plan. It was their only chance. By the time they dared make the first move they were both shaking from the cold dampness exuding from the stones and their tongues were roughened by the brakish water they caught dripping from the walls.

Nancy never forgot the hour that followed. It was nearly three in the morning. Rick's gun was empty. Inch by inch she crawled forward, following him as he made for the opening. Her heart pounded against her ribs; her lips were dry. Now he had risen to his feet, had crept up the stone steps. Arm raised, he stood there, motionless. Would the guard see him? Why was he so slow? Suddenly his arm fell. There was a sickening thud—silence. He signaled her to follow.

They were outside now, in the light of the fading moon. Snakelike, over stones that bruised her, and seemed to thunder aloud at every cautious forward movement, she strained upward. Her very breathing seemed to shatter the silence.

"We—we're going to make it." Rick, behind her now, spurred her on, his lean bulk sheltering her from the glow of the distant camp fire. He had stunned the guard, but at any time that guard might recover and give the alarm. "Run for the plane as fast as you can! There isn't a minute to lose."

But where was it, that level on which she had left the plane years before, it seemed? She dragged herself up by bleeding fingers, swayed at last drunkenly to her feet.

"Quick!" His hand caught hers, jerking her toward a far gray shape glisten-

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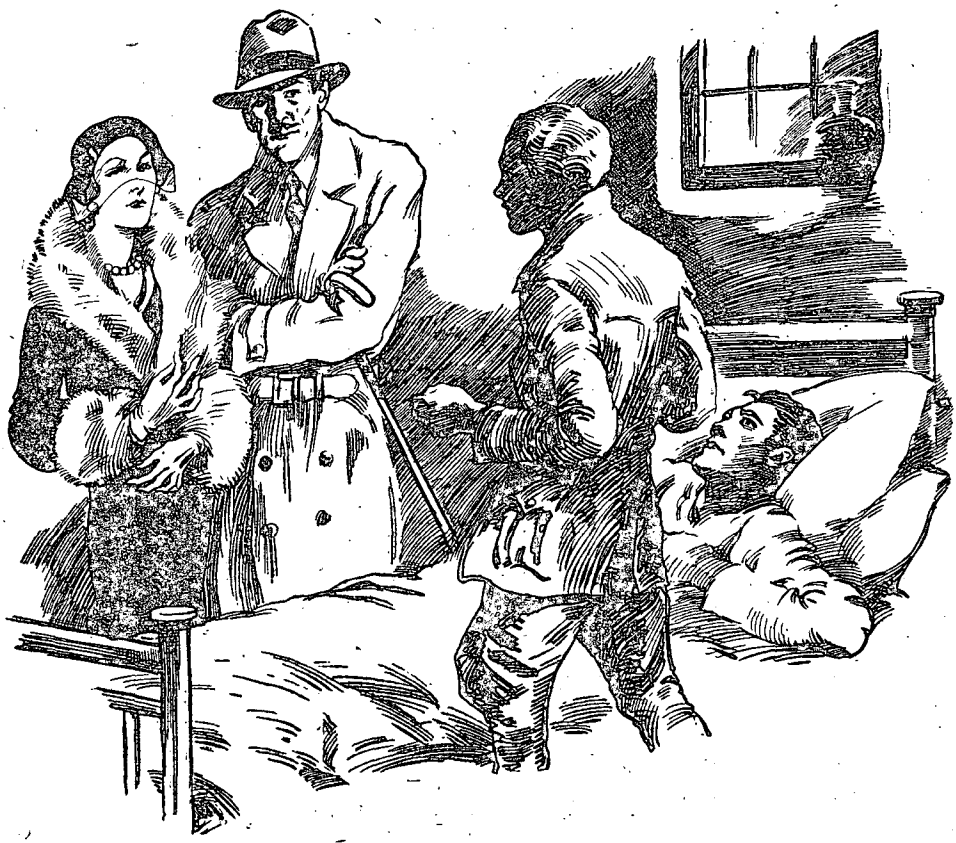
ing like a giant skeleton in the dim mountain light.

The rest was a mad dream. Somehow she was in the cockpit; he was kicking away the blocks he had put under the wheels; the motor coughed, whirred, roared into the silence like a machine gun. It would take a few minutes to warm up the engine. Meanwhile Lascalle would be roused by the din.

Something spurted from the ground to one side. She turned to see dark figures running. Lascalle! Rick had started toward her when suddenly she saw him hesitate, signal fiercely for her to go on, and then crumple to the ground.

She leaned out, clutching his sagging shoulder. The roar of the motor drowned out the sound of the pistol reports, but she could hear the twang as they cut across the struts. Hands at last beneath his arms, she dragged him up, across the sill, into the rear cockpit, straining until her muscles were a quivering agony. She opened the throttle wide and taxied into the wind. Looking backward, she saw Lascalle within a hundred feet, his arm lifted. She flattened. There was a crack as the windshield shattered about a bullet hole. Gathering speed, the ship slowly left the ground.

With an indrawn sob, Nancy roared



"Will you please go—both of you?" Nancy's eyes blazed. "How dare you come here and talk to me like that?"

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skyward, leveled, banked, and set her course for Hermosillo. Rick had said to make for Hermosillo. There she could wire her mother, and he could file his claim before the mining board.

She looked at the inert figure slumped behind her. A dark stain was spreading across his khaki shirt. Now he was dead. If he had not given her that heavy coat, he might have been saved. She felt numb, as if something vital had died with him.

But he was not dead. Two hours later she was hurrying along the cobbled streets of the quaint little Mexican town to which she had been forced down by fuel shortage. Brewster was comfortably convalescent at the hotel room which the local doctor had secured for him with a native nurse. Nancy's fingers clutched the papers she had just received from the mining board—the official record of his claim, together with the receipt for the annual tax. In imagination she could see Rick now—the way the smile would deepen in his eyes, the whimsical pucker of his lips as he would take the papers from her, and then scold her again because she had not repeated that wire to her mother.

She grinned at the memory of her first and only message:

All well. Detained in Eulalia by engine trouble. Letter follows. NANCY.

Her mother must be furious, Nancy reasoned, or she would have answered. Gil would never forgive her. But what did it matter? What did anything in the world matter now, except that that bullet had glanced away and missed Rick's heart? He would live. Now, when she gave him this paper, perhaps he would forget that she was engaged to Gil. If he looked straight into her eyes, as only he could, he would see what she could no longer hide. She hesitated, hand now on the doorknob of his room, eager, yet half afraid of those probing eyes. Her heart drummed in her ears.

She opened the door, and then stood frozen, staring at the native girl who knelt by the bed, her face pressed against his hand. Her voice rose and fell in liquid murmur, passionate, inarticulate. Rick's eyes met Nancy's across the girl's bent head. She saw the slow red rise from his neck to his black hair.

"Nancy! Wait!"

"Sorry to intrude," she said curtly. "You evidently didn't hear my knock." She tossed him the papers. "That's the receipt—for everything."

"Nancy!"

But she had turned blindly to the door. There she stopped. Her mother confronted her from the threshold, her mother, very slim in youthful tweeds, her chin buried in her silver-fox collar! Gilbert Revaux stood just behind, his blond mustache twitching.

"So this is your young bonanza king who's been getting himself and you into all the papers!" Mrs. Carter began in that soft, purring tone that in the old days had always reduced Nancy Carter to panic. "May I ask if you intend to marry him?"

"That's what I'm hoping, Mrs. Carter. This is Mrs. Carter?" Rick had pulled up painfully on one elbow, his face grayed with the effort.

Mrs. Carter bowed. The native girl had withdrawn to the far side of the room, her black eyes smoldering, her fingers clenched in the folds of her striped skirt.

"Mother! How can you?"

"You needn't take that tone, young lady." Gil stepped forward, laying a protective hand on her mother's arm.

"In view of the fact that papers all over the country have been carrying the story of your dramatic disappearance and subsequent romantic week-end with this young man, her question is not unreasonable. Just what are your plans, if we may——"

"Will you please go—both of you?" Nancy's eyes blazed in her drawn face.

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"How dare you come here and talk to me like that? I'm not going to marry him—I don't care what you think! I'm not going to marry you, Gil, or any—anybody!"

"That's quite all right; there's no need for any melodrama, my dear." Her mother waved Gilbert aside. "You see, you can't very well marry Gil now, for I—married him myself." She glanced up at the stocky figure beside her, her hard, cool face suddenly tender. "You gave him a rather raw deal, Nancy, running off like that—and I—it wasn't easy for me. Then he thought of this—it was his idea——"

The truth cut across the girl's brain like a knife. Her mother had always loved him! Nancy's cheeks burned.

"We knew you were safe. They wired from Sierra Blanca that you'd passed there," her mother continued, her fingers tucked in Gilbert's arm. "Fortunate for our peace of mind, you'd painted that miserable plane yellow, so we could trace you easily. We were at Monterey when your wire was forwarded, so we came right on in the car. Now you tell your young man good-by, and meet us in our room. You can go abroad to Gil's sister, Letty, until this thing blows over."

"Nancy!"

Rick's call stopped her as she would have followed her mother.

"Well?" She tried to meet his eyes, but could not.

He spoke in an aside to the native girl in Spanish. She slipped from the room.

"You needn't have bothered to send her away," Nancy said tonelessly.

"Nancy, come here. No, closer—or I'll come over there and get you. You've got to listen to me, do you hear me?" His fingers grasped her arm. "That girl's the sister of the half-breed Indian—José Prietas. Remember, I had you wire him and tell him he's half owner of the Tiopa? He's still in jail—the whole family's been almost starving. Naturally they think I'm a tin god now. That's the first time I ever laid eyes on her, but you saw how grateful she felt. Nancy, look at me!"

He pulled her closer. His eyes sought hers remorselessly, but she dropped her head.

"The English interests have offered to finance the Tiopa. They've sent up a posse to round up Lascalle and his gang already. It'll be safe now when you go back. But you're going to stay and marry me. You're going down right now and tell your mother that. But first you're going to kiss me!"

"Please—don't! You're just s-sor-ry for—me." She was crying.

"Sorry! Why, I love you! Ever since you dropped into my world, I've loved you more than life itself, but I thought you loved that fellow Revaux. Nancy——"

He had drawn her down beside him, and his lips sought hers as she buried her face against his shoulder. At the touch of his fingers beneath her chin, something quivered deep within her, like the challenge of the singing wind. She lifted her face, unafraid, and her eyes closed in rapture as he kissed her.

This was the answer to everything, the rush of winds, the bright questing light of the sun, the stormy restlessness that had always been in her heart. For, as he kissed her and kissed her again, Nancy knew that fate had sent her forth to find him, and that he had brought her love—the kind to last a lifetime.

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Romance

By Floria Howe Bruess

GET this interview or——" Over and over the words pounded in Cornelia's brain as she climbed the flight of stairs leading to the little apartment she shared with Dorothy.

"Or you're fired," she finished the sentence the city editor had left ominously unfinished. She knew what his words implied.

She opened the door, walked into the living room, and sank into a chair.

Dorothy stepped from the tiny kitchen, and stared at the girl.

"For Heaven's sake, why so dejected?" she demanded.

"I'm done, out, fired—or will be in a day or two," Cornelia said heavily. "I've tried every possible way to get that interview with Deering Brixton. He won't see me at his office. When I waited for him near his club he hardly glanced at me. 'I've nothing to say,' he said, and how he said it!"

"And you're taking his tone of voice to heart? Cornelia, you're not hard-boiled enough to be a newspaper woman. What do you care about his tone of voice? And now you're ready to give up!"

Dorothy paused from sheer lack of breath.

"I can't help it," Cornelia persisted. "I like Deering. He doesn't know I exist, but I like him. And he hasn't even looked at me. I hate to hound him. Why should the public be in-

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formed as to the reasons for his broken engagement with Margaret Daley? It's their affair, only——"

"And she thinks she's a reporter!" Dorothy lifted her hands to high heaven.

"Now see here, Cornelia," she went on. "You had a mighty hard time getting this job in the first place; you wore yourself ragged before you did land it. And now you're going to hold it——"

"I'd like to know how," Cornelia cut in bitterly. She lifted golden eyes to her friend's face.

There was silence for a moment; then: "I've got it!" Dorothy's eyes gleamed wickedly. "You'll have to use a ruse. Hang around his house; you know where he lives. No one's in the house but himself and his servants. Watch your cue. When he drives up, throw a faint in front of his house. He'll pick you up, of course, and carry you inside. The rest should be easy, if you have any sense at all. With your looks and that unsophisticated way-down-South manner of yours—which is as rare in this town as roses at the north pole—you should get not only this story, but the whole story of his life, the poor dear!"

Despite Cornelia's anxiety, a little smile crept into her golden-brown eyes.

"Those things happen in books, but not in real life."

"Real life!" Dorothy scoffed. "If you knew the things that happen in this town—but you've only been here five months. You'll learn," she said darkly. "It can be done, if you have the backbone to do it."

"He'd probably put me in his car and tell his chauffeur to take me to the nearest hospital and not bother him about me," Cornelia observed dryly.

"Not after he got a look at you. Oh, no, not Deering Brixton! Before his engagement he was the best playboy in New York. And now that his girl has left him cold and hopped the boat to Europe, he's probably looking around. Deering's a connoisseur of beauty."

"Don't talk that way about him, Dot. He's fine, splendid—and he looks so unhappy." The words ended in a little sigh.

"Yes—and you'll be out of a job. It's a wonder they've kept you as long as they have. You're the world's greatest fizzle as a newspaperwoman."

"I didn't want to go into that profession. I wanted to teach music!" Cornelia cried despairingly.

"Of course. But you couldn't find pupils or anything else. Getting on that paper was a good break for you. I could never get you in my shop for you're not tall enough to model, though you're better-looking than I am and wear clothes as well as I do. Come on, Cornelia. Be a sport for once in your life. Try that stunt. If it doesn't work, there's no harm done."

Cornelia was thinking desperately. It was quiet in the section where Deering lived. Cars were passing of course, but there were usually few pedestrians. Would it work out?

"A desperate case needs a desperate remedy," Dorothy said softly, watching the girl's lovely young face.

Cornelia drew the breath of a swimmer who plunges into cold water.

"All right. I'll try it. And if he sends me to a hospital?"

"Revive in the car before you get there," Dorothy supplied promptly.

"It's wild, absurd, but—I'll try it. I'll try anything once."

"That's the girl!" Dorothy sprang to the little kitchen. "Oh, I left the iron connected—I was pressing my chiffon. I'm dining out to-night. Get that? Not eating, but dining!"

"That means some wonderful place?" Cornelia asked, a smile deepening in her golden eyes.

"I should say it does! We're going in his father's limousine. He borrowed it for the evening." Cornelia heard

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her friend singing under her breath as she pressed the orchid chiffon dress.

Cornelia stood in the shadows of a building, her heart pounding as she watched the cars flit by. A little panic began to sweep her as the moments passed. She began to shiver as with a nervous chill.

"I know his car," she mused. "I've watched it often enough in the past few days. When I see it turn I'll start walking toward his house. What makes me tremble so? I haven't a particle of spunk." Her eyes were troubled as she glanced down the street.

"Here it is! It's his car. Oh, I can't do it—I can't! I'll walk on!"

Panic held her. She hastened her steps until she was walking at top speed. Her face was turned away from him. She couldn't bear to look at him.

She heard the door of his car slam, heard his voice. "I'll want you at eight thirty, Palmer."

Her heart was pounding. Now was the time. "But I can't!" she whispered desperately.

Then the unexpected happened. As she hurried along her high heel caught in a crack in the sidewalk. She was thrown to the ground. The fall left her breathless, dizzy. She tried to rise, but sank down with a moan of pain.

"Why, what's the matter?"

She fought the dizzy sensation that was enveloping her. The world seemed to reel and grow black.

"Palmer!" She heard Deering's voice. Then: "Confound it, he's gone!"

She felt his arms raising her. "There, you're all right. Turned your ankle, didn't you? You had a hard fall. Dizzy? Lean against me."

"I can't stand. My ankle——" Her voice seemed to come from far away.

"What a mess!" Deering Brixton thought irritably. "Not a taxi in sight. What shall I do with the girl?" He looked down at her, perplexed, irritated.

A window was raised. Cornelia heard a woman's voice. "May I suggest, Mr. Brixton, that you bring the young lady in until she's able to go on? I saw her fall. She got a bad wrench."

Deering gave a relieved sigh. Why hadn't he thought of that before? His housekeeper could look after the girl until she was able to go on.

He lifted her gently in his arms. What a little thing she was, and how white her small young face was!

As he carried her up the steps he glanced down at her. Her beautiful eyes were open, fixed on his face. They were still dazed. What extraordinary long lashes she had, and what a wonderful color her eyes were! They were a tawny brown.

"The poor thing! Why, she's not much more than a child! I saw her fall."

"Open the library door, please, Mrs. Bell."

After a few moments Cornelia found herself deposited gently in a deep soft chair. A scent of roses came to her and she heard the cheerful crackling of an open fire.

Her ankle did not hurt so badly now, and she had recovered her breath. She looked up, her big eyes pleading, wistful.

"I'm dreadfully sorry to cause you so much trouble." Her soft, rich voice fell on the room like a note of music.

Interested, Deering looked down at her. Here was a girl of obvious refinement, unquestioned good breeding.

"Take off her shoe and stocking, Mrs. Bell. I'll see if she's sprained her ankle. Don't be afraid." A ghost of a smile was in his eyes. "I've had two years of medical school. I thought I'd be a surgeon, but I changed my mind."

Cornelia looked up at him. He had turned and was looking down into the crackling fire on the big hearth.

"Now, Mr. Brixton," his housekeeper said.

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"Good." He bent and examined the ankle. "It's beginning to swell. Does that hurt? Now? You're lucky it isn't a sprain. A strained ligament is all that's the matter. Please tell Jackson to bring a roll of adhesive tape, Mrs. Bell. I'll strap it up. She'll be all right." He turned back to Cornelia.

"Feel better? Of course you do! Your color's returning."

"Oh, I'm most dreadfully sorry to trouble you so much," she said hastily. "You're very kind."

Mrs. Bell returned from calling Jackson, and turned to Cornelia, a warm glow on her motherly face.

"I believe you're a Southerner, too," she exclaimed.

"I am—from Richmond. Are you from the South?" The girl looked eagerly at the kindly woman.

"Why, I'm from a farm just a short distance from Richmond."

"You are?" Cornelia's face brightened. "Perhaps you know of my father, Judge Wilson. He was born in Richmond."

The butler entered bringing the adhesive tape. Deering set to work strapping the ankle. What a dainty little foot the girl had! As he worked he listened to the conversation between his housekeeper and his guest.

"Is Judge Wilson your father? Well, bless you heart, child, I knew him. He tried a case for me. And you're his daughter?" Mrs. Bell's voice was delighted.

Deering looked up. "As you seem to know this young lady's father, suppose you introduce us," he said whimiscally.

"I'm certainly glad to. This is Mr. Brixton—Miss Wilson." She waved her hand from Deering to Cornelia.

Cornelia laughed softly. After a second, Deering's laugh came, brief and abruptly checked. He continued his work. Cornelia's eyes were on his bent head with its thick blond hair. For days he had filled her thoughts.

She was thinking incredulously: "I am here in his house and even properly introduced!" Aloud she said:

"Isn't it strange, Mrs. Bell, that you should know my father?"

Deering broke in: "As I've observed a hundred times—the world is small." He rose and looked down at Cornelia.

Her cheeks were exquisitely flushed with excitement, her eyes shining. Her lovely sensitive lips were parted like an eager child's.

"I think, sir, a cup of tea would be good for Miss Wilson, if I may suggest," Mrs. Bell said softly.

"Why, of course."

The housekeeper looked at Cornelia, and made a little bow. "I'm mighty glad to have met you, Miss Wilson. I hope your ankle gets well soon."

"Thank you. You're very kind."

The woman left the room. Deering walked to a window and stood gazing out as Cornelia drew on her stocking and pump. The pain was nearly all gone now.

She lay back in the deep luxurious chair, her eyes on Deering's straight back. How splendid he was, even finer than she had thought he would be!

"Perhaps you're busy. Am I keeping you from anything?" she asked.

"Not at all. I always relax during this hour. Ah, here we are. Set the table by the fire, Jackson. That will do."

The butler withdrew noiselessly.

"Will you pour the tea? I like to see a woman's hand among the tea things." He looked at her gravely. What straight direct eyes he had, so gray, so clear!

Thrilled beyond words, Cornelia lifted the silver pot.

"Cake or sandwich?" His eyes were on hers.

How marvelous it all was, how unbelievable, wonderful!

After a time: "While your foot is resting, I wouldn't step on it for a little

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while. Suppose you tell me what you're doing so far from home. Visiting in the big city?"

"No. I came here to earn my living. A girl, a schoolmate of mine, came here two years ago. I'm sharing her apartment."

"She—his wife didn't like me. If I'd remained home I would have become a bone of contention. I realized that after she had been my stepmother a few months. So I told dad I wanted a career—my music. He opposed the idea at first, but finally yielded. No doubt

"Your touch is beautiful—dreamy, soothing. One can almost forget."
He sighed deeply.

Deering's surprise showed on his face.

She answered that surprise. "My father married again, Mr. Brixton. My mother died six years ago. I—I reckon he was lonelier than I knew. I was happy to have him marry, for he said he was so happy. And we want those we love to be happy, don't we?" She turned toward him pleadingly.

He looked into her appealing eyes. "Yes," he replied slowly. "Those we love we wish to be happy."

She nodded her bright chestnut head. she influenced him. She was glad to have me go.

"But I wanted dad to be happy. And I knew he would be unhappy as soon as he realized that his wife and I were not —congenial. So I came here."

Deering looked strangely at her flushed eager little face. What an exquisite girl she was, and what a loving, unselfish one!

He replaced his cup and drew out his cigarette case, looking surprised when she refused a cigarette.

"What instrument do you play?"

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"Piano," she returned in her soft voice.

"Indeed? The piano seems strange in this age of radio and victrolas. Will you play for me? There's a piano over there."

She rose, then sank back with a little grimace.

"Your ankle? Don't stand on your foot just yet. I'll help you to the piano."

He put his arm around her. How wonderful, how glorious! She turned her lovely face and looked at him, dazed with the knowledge that had come to her. With the swiftness of a miracle, she knew she loved him.

For days she had watched him, seeking an interview. She had cut his picture from the paper and tacked it over her dressing table. For days she had studied his face. And now here in his own home he looked at her with kindly interested eyes, his arm around her as she limped to the piano bench.

The wonder of it! The romance of it! Surely a gracious fate had ordered it all.

Pierced by the sword of love, dazed with the world-shaking thing that had happened to her, she looked up at him, half blind with shock.

"What extraordinary eyes you have," he murmured. "Brown velvet with a yellow flame burning in them! There, are you comfortable? That piano hasn't been touched in months."

He sat near her after switching on a few soft-shaded lamps, for the brief winter day was dimming.

Softly she struck a few chords, trying out the piano. For fifteen minutes she played, then paused, turned, and looked at him.

He was lying in the chair, his head back, his eyes closed. As the music ceased he opened his eyes.

"That was exquisite! Some of it seemed familiar. Some I have never heard before."

"A number of things I ran together, things induced by the fire and lamplight."

"Your touch is beautiful—dreamy, soothing. One can almost forget." He sighed deeply.

"Forget?" she questioned.

"Bitterness and unhappiness."

She was tremulously aware of his thoughts, aware and afraid. "Don't speak," something cautioned her. "Words would bring his thoughts from out of the shadows, would bring disaster."

To Cornelia, heart beating like a drum, a little shiver running through her, the prolonged silence became filled with menace. She felt she must say something, anything.

"Bitterness is so futile," she faltered.

"Futile"—his attention was arrested by the word—"but often justified."

"No!" She spoke more vehemently than she realized.

"I've a notion to talk to you about myself. Something has been pent up in me. There has been no one—no one," he emphasized, "to whom I could unburden myself. I should like your viewpoint—you with your sweetness and fresh, wholesome view of life." For a moment he hesitated. Yet this girl was refined, educated, of a good Southern family. She was a comparative stranger in New York, knew nothing of his affairs.

He wanted to tell her, Cornelia was thinking, and she would listen. Perhaps she could comfort him, but she would never give to her paper what he was about to say. This was in confidence.

Her eyes were glowing, her cheeks sweet and warm. "Sometimes it eases one's heart to talk of a thing that distresses one." It was all right now. He would tell her, for she would never betray.

"I believe it. Miss Wilson, what would be your opinion of a girl en-

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gaged to marry a man who loved her, the wedding but a few weeks away, calmly telling her prospective husband that the world had changed, that the idea of a young married woman's giving all her attention to her husband was absurd, that she intended to lunch, drive, dine alone in restaurants with men who interested her, and that she would offer her husband the same privileges?

"The girl to whom I was engaged told me marriage becomes monotonous, boresome if husband and wife devoted all their time to each other.

"The world may change, creeds, manners alter; still in my opinion, love does not change. And marriage should be built on the rock of——"

He paused abruptly, and Cornelia drew a shaking breath.

"Well?" he flung at her.

"You told her you objected to the conditions she imposed?"

"Certainly. What is your opinion? Do you think I am in error? I may add that my former fiancée was indignant, said I was hopelessly old-fashioned. She broke the engagement and sailed the following day for France."

Deering flicked the ashes thoughtfully from his cigarette.

"I hardly know why I've told you this," he went on. "I'm not a garrulous nature. I believe your music unlocked ——" His voice trailed away.

Cornelia thought swiftly: "It's my love drawing you to me like a magnet—the music only soothed you."

Aloud she said, her voice low, vibrant: "The girl didn't love you. How could she love you"—there was a passionate little note in that rich voice—"and not be contented with you—alone? Where there is love, there is no monotony."

He nodded. "I thought the same. I know that if we had married, all other women would have been less than nothing to me."

The magic of that hour was gone. Cornelia's heart pained with a swift wild jealousy for the unknown girl. "He loved her! He still loves her," she whispered to her suddenly aching heart.

A clock struck the half hour. "I must go, Mr. Brixton. It's five thirty. You've been very kind to me. I shall never forget it—or you." Her voice faltered.

He looked at her sharply. "I don't intend to let you forget me. You and I are going to be great friends. We already are. Strange, isn't it? I feel I've known you a long time. Sometime I'm going to ask you to have dinner with me."

She rose, standing on one foot to protect her hurt ankle. "That's lovely of you," she said simply, watching him walk to the house phone and order the car.

There seemed to be something eager in his face as he helped her with her coat. She had not taken off her soft little beret.

"Keep off that foot for the next twenty-four hours," he directed. "I'll carry you out to the car."

How she thrilled to the touch of his arm! Her breath was warm on his cheek as he lifted her. A stray wisp of bright hair brushed his lips.

In the car they speeded as fast as traffic permitted to her apartment. How sweet it was to sit beside him, talking so companionably, her shoulder occasionally brushing his. Then they were before her apartment, and he was lifting her out.

"One flight up, you say? But you can't climb a long flight of steps. I'll carry you."

"But I'm too heavy," she protested.

His laugh sounded very young and boyish. Carrying her up the stairs seemed no effort to him. In fact, he wondered why her weight felt so sweet in his arms.

Upstairs, she leaned over and opened

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the door. The room was empty. Silently they entered. He deposited her in a chair near the door.

"Is that you, Cornelia?" Dorothy's voice came from the kitchen.

"Yes."

"Well, it's about time. Hurry and set the table. I've a delicious steak for dinner. Oh, how did you come out? Did you pull that stunt in front of Deering Brixton's house? Your city editor just called up. From his voice I imagine you're fired if you didn't get the Brixton broken-engagement story."

The silence was ghastly. Deering looked down at Cornelia's upturned face. Swiftly the eager light that was in his eyes died. His lips became a grim line. It was a bitter, hostile face Cornelia looked into, cold and accusing.

Her lips parted, but her voice would not come. Faintly she heard Dorothy call: "Snap into it, Cornelia. Set the table. I have an appetite like nobody's business. Tell me—did you strut your stuff for Deering Brix——"

He cut in, voice hard, cold.

"I congratulate you. You're a clever actress." The next instant the door slammed behind him.

Desperately Cornelia tried to cry out, to call him back. But she was cold with horror at the thing that had happened.

It couldn't be true! And yet, irrevocably it was.

"Well, for the love of Pete, what ails you?" Dorothy's voice broke in on the wild weeping that shook Cornelia.

Later she explained everything, sob-choked, incoherent. Dorothy listened, her eyes widening.

"But what on earth are you crying about?" she asked bewilderedly. "You got the story, and I bet it's a hot one. Tell me about it later."

"I'll never tell it to you or any one!"

Dorothy's bewilderment grew. "But you went there on purpose to get it! And the breaks were sure with you when you turned your ankle without even trying. That's one time Heaven was good to the poor working girl," she exclaimed.

"They can fire me." Cornelia dried her wet eyes, looking fixedly at her friend. "But I'll never give them that story! I can see the tabloids now. How they'd play it up!" She shuddered, and raising a shaking hand, removed her beret.

"Well, I don't get you at all," Dorothy remarked. "You sound cuckoo to me."

"Can't you see? He was so kind to me. We even had tea together. I was his guest. If I were the daughter of the finest family in New York, he couldn't have been more courteous. Do you think I'd betray his confidence?"

Dorothy shook her head. "I don't get it at all. Confidence has nothing to do with your job."

"I'm through with that work."

"Don't be silly!" Dorothy scoffed. "You've got a big story and you won't spill it. Of all the saps!"

A sudden thought struck her. "Say, you haven't fallen for that playboy, have you?" she demanded.

"He isn't a playboy. He's fine, and clean and wonderful!"

"Oh, wonderful, is it? My dear girl," Dorothy went on patiently, studying Cornelia's indignant face, "that boy's got a weeping list just waiting to console him."

But Cornelia wasn't listening. She was thinking frantically. "I must explain it to him. He's home by this time." It was not necessary to look up his number in the telephone directory. She knew it.

She reached for the phone and called his number.

"Please tell Mr. Brixton that Miss Wilson must speak with him. It—it's urgent."

Her hand gripped the phone fiercely as she waited.

"Yes. He is? I'm sorry." Wearily

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Cornelia hung up the receiver. "The butler says Mr. Brixton is too busy to talk over the phone," she told Dorothy in a dull, lifeless voice.

Dorothy looked keenly at the girl's unhappy face. "Well, I'm sunk!" She turned to the kitchen. "But I've still got my appetite," she threw over her shoulder.

"Of all things!" she told herself while she prepared the meal. "That poor little kid is head over heels in love with Deering Brixton! I'll have to find another man to help her snap out of it. The trouble is a lot of men don't care for her type, even though she's the prettiest thing in New York. They say she's slow. Well, I've got to find some one."

The following day Cornelia tried to get in touch with Deering at his office. "This is Miss Wilson. It's very important that I speak, Mr. Brixton." A moment later she hung up the receiver, hand listless.

"He won't talk to me. But surely he's seen that the papers carry no story!"

As it was, however, Deering had avoided the morning papers as though they were pestilence. All that day he watched narrowly for signs of sympathy or mockery from his friends. He woud have preferred to stay away from it all at his home, but pride drove him to his office. Pride drove him, reluctant, to his club. He would show them he wasn't afraid of their sympathy, their mockery.

On the second day following the episode with Cornelia he was at his office early. His secretary had not yet arrived. When the phone rang he answered the call himself.

"Mr. Brixton? Oh, I'm so glad! I couldn't write to you, because I felt you'd destroy the note without reading it," a voice said breathlessly over the wire. He knew that voice, rich and delicate with its Southern accent.

"Please, listen to me. An explanation is due you. It was all true what Dorothy said. I intended to do that very thing—get a story by playing sick in front of your house. But when I got there I found I couldn't do such a thing. I was hurrying away when I hurt my ankle. Haven't you seen that there's no story about you in the papers? Oh, I've been so ashamed, so miserable over it all!"

He heard the smothered little sob in her voice.

His voice was curt and cold as he answered. "You gave me to understand you taught piano——"

"No, I didn't," she broke in eagerly. "I came here intending to secure pupils, but I was unsuccessful. In fact I couldn't get any work. Providentially this newspaper position was offered me, and I took it."

"I see. Is there anything else you wish to say?"

At the other end of the line Cornelia shrank at the coldness of his tone.

"No. I only wanted you to know."

"Thank you." A sharp, final click sounded in her ear. She sat motionless, looking at the phone.

"That's all," she said aloud, her voice as strained as her face. The golden radiance of her eyes seemed to have dimmed, and her eager, vivid little face had grown suddenly older.

"My ankle's almost well now. This afternoon I'll look for work." She walked around the little apartment, straightening things; then she washed the breakfast dishes. Occasionally she shivered, as though she were cold; occasionally she pressed her hands hard against her heart as though to still a pain.

At noon the bell rang. She threw open the door and looked incredulously into Deering's face.

"I've come to apologize. I was rude over the phone this morning. You see, I didn't quite realize; I've been thinking

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"Is that you, Cornelia?" Dorothy's voice came from the kitchen.

hard thoughts about you. Will you forget it, and let me take you to luncheon? My car is downstairs."

A song rose in her heart. It was in a singing voice she answered him.

"Oh, I'm so glad you understand and believe me!"

He looked at her curiously. "You seem really happy about it."

"I am happy. And I'm dressed to go out. I intend looking for a position to-day."

She lifted her eyes. He noticed that her hair held the same beautiful golden-brown tints.

"You lost your position because you withheld the story?"

"Not altogether that. I haven't made a very good reporter." She smiled at him shyly, her heart in her eyes. "I'll be ready in a moment. Won't you sit down?"

With fluttering hands she pulled on her hat, her coat, picked up her bag and gloves.

It was a wonderful hour, an hour of pure magic. She listened to his voice, her own voice, singing on the most commonplace words. Joy ran riotously in her veins.

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At last: "And now where shall I drop you?"

She consulted a list. "This one. He'll see applicants between two and three o'clock."

In the car he turned to her. "How old are you, Cornelia?" How easily he said her name! How beautiful it sounded on his lips!

"Twenty." She raised shining eyes to him. Her cheeks were delicately flushed.

"Quite old, aren't you?" he asked smilingly. "I'm twenty-six. Will you have dinner with me to-morrow night? I have some theater tickets."

Too happy for mere words she nodded, afraid to trust her voice.

Frequently now he called for her. They went to dinner or the theater, sometimes both. Once they went for a drive in the crisp, cool air in his roadster, himself at the wheel.

As the days went by, Dorothy looked on darkly. "No good will come of it, Cornelia. He'll just break your heart; that's all. He's just giving you the run-around. Has he ever tried to kiss you?"

"No. Once he put his arm across the back of the seat and drew me to him —a little," Cornelia answered shyly, her eyes like golden stars.

"Hm-m-m, he was trying you out. I wouldn't put too much faith in him if I were you. He's a society swell. Why should he pay so much attention to you?"

And then after two weeks of bewildering romance, of happiness so great that life seemed unreal, her world suddenly crashed around her.

Dorothy came home that night, unusually silent. Cornelia hurried around the little kitchen preparing dinner, chatting happily about her new work as filing clerk in an insurance office. Dorothy looked often at the girl, commiseration in her eyes.

Finally the other's unusual silence struck Cornelia. She looked at her questioningly. "Why so silent, Dot?"

Dorothy walked to Cornelia and placed her arms on the girl's shoulders.

"Cornelia, I heard something in the shop to-day. Get a good hold on yourself. You're going to get a blow right between the eyes."

A wave of apprehension swept Cornelia. She paled a little.

"Margaret Daley's back, the girl Deering was engaged to. She had no sooner reached France than she caught a boat back.

"She was in the shop to-day with a friend of hers. As I modeled for them I listened with both ears to their conversation.

"Margaret Daley is sorry about Brixton and they've patched things up. Whether or not they're engaged again, I don't know, but I heard her friend say: 'And you're having dinner with Deering to-night? What fun!'

"Miss Daley said: 'Not fun. It's too thrilling for fun. I'm wild about Deering Brixton. And I'll marry him and train him afterward.'"

Dorothy paused and looked away from Cornelia's marble face.

"He'll eat out of her hand, Cornelia. He may hold out a little while, but Margaret Daley gets what she wants. She's a go-getting girl, and no man can resist her. She's beautiful, fascinating, with that bit of danger in her that some men like."

There was heavy silence. Dorothy looked anxiously at the stricken girl.

"For Heaven's sake, say something, Cornelia. I know he was rushing you. Even I was beginning to think this was going to be an honest-to-goodness romance what with all the flowers he sent you, the candy, books, and all the rest. But his old girl is back, hot after him, and you've as much chance as a snowball in Africa.

"Oh, well, let's eat. I'm dead tired and hungry. What have you for dinner? Lamb chops? Goody! Come to Dot, little lamb."

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A strangled little cry of grief came from Cornelia's white lips. She sank into a chair, her eyes fixed unseeingly on the wall opposite.

Dorothy bustled around the two-plate electric stove. Soon the meal was on the table. "Come on, dear. Eat something; it will do you good," she coaxed.

The gallant little smile sitting so strangely on Cornelia's white, strained face twisted Dorothy's heart.

"Oh, well," she said gruffly to conceal her emotions, "that's all a man like Deering is good for—to break a girl's heart."

"Don't blame him," Cornelia flew to his defense. "He's never said a word of love to me. He always said we were great friends. Sometimes he told me I was—sweet. He's not to be blamed."

"Well, there are plenty more men in the world." But Cornelia's eyes silenced her.

An hour later Dot said: "I'm going to the movies with Charlie. Want to come along? This place is like a funeral."

Cornelia shook her head. It would be good to be alone with the grief that tore at her. "I'll never see him again. No doubt he'll marry Margaret very soon. Oh, it's hard—hard——" she thought drearily.

"I love him more than anything in life. I'd love him if he were poor, friendless. I wish he were, for then I could show him how I love him!" She felt the tears coming and fled to the bathroom. When she finally emerged, controlled, Dorothy had gone.

Suddenly the light in the room became unbearable. Cornelia reached out, switched it off, and sat huddled in her chair, little fists pressed hard against her lips to check the sobs.

At last, a long time after Dorothy left, Cornelia rose wearily to her feet, switched on the light, swung out the folding bed, and walked to her dresser. Deering's face looked out at her from a newspaper photograph. She unpinned it from the wall and looked at it, her eyes misty, her breath coming like a child who had been crying.

With a quick little gesture she crushed the pictured face in her hand. "He's yours, Margaret Daley," she said aloud. "You have everything else in the world—have him, too!"

The following day passed in dull, apathetic weariness. The evening at home dragged its length.

Dorothy, seated under the lamp sorting out silk stockings, looked often at Cornelia, who sat holding a book, never turning the pages.

"She's terribly hard hit," Dorothy reflected. "Thank Heaven I've never fallen for that love stuff. Poor little kid. I wish I could do something to make her feel better." A sigh was on Dorothy's lips. "If I could only find a man who likes her type."

That was only the second evening in two weeks without a phone call from Deering. The phone stood dark, mute, insensible to the girl's eyes that turned upon it so often.

Another day passed, another evening, without word from Deering.

"Since Margaret returned," Cornelia's thoughts hammered against her aching heart, "Deering's forgotten me entirely."

She lay for long hours in bed, staring into the darkness before sleep would claim her. She spent long wearisome hours at the office, hours that had once passed so swiftly, fed by the joy that had been hers.

The third evening she came into the apartment a little later than usual. Dorothy was already home, busy in the kitchen.

"Is that you, Cornelia?" she called as the door closed.

"Yes. I'm a little late."

"There was a phone call for you from

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Long Island—Deering Brixton. He said he'd call again."

Cornelia raced to the kitchen. "Say that again!" she demanded breathlessly.

"You heard me the first time," the older girl grinned impishly. But her cool gray eyes were excited.

"When did he call?"

"About ten minutes ago."

Cornelia's thoughts were racing. Why had Deering called? It was just a friendly call; perhaps to tell her of the renewed engagement between Margaret and him. The papers had printed a story of her hasty return and had hinted slyly at a reconciliation between her and Deering.

There was heavy silence. Dorothy looked anxiously at the stricken girl. "For Heaven's sake, say something, Cornelia."

Why had he called, and why didn't he call again? It was eight o'clock and Dorothy had gone out on a date. Restlessly Cornelia paced the room, in a mounting fever of suspense.

Oh, just to hear that dear voice again! If only she could!

At eight thirty there was still no call. Cornelia's cheeks burned and her hands were icy.

"Why did I have to be late to-night of all nights?" she thought passionately. "It was cruel—cruel——"

At quarter of nine she decided that he wouldn't call again. She sank into a chair and stared with rebellious eyes at the phone.

Her buzzer sounded. She leaped to the speaking tube, and stood clinging to it.

"I'm late; I was detained by traffic. I drove over from Long Island. I've been over there at my sister's home for the past two days. May I come up, Cornelia?"

His crisp, quick voice!

She never remembered what she answered. But a moment later he was at the door.

He stood looking at her. Something strange was in his eyes, something she had not seen in them before. He slipped off his overcoat and flung it across a chair.

Still standing, facing her, Deering Brixton said what he had come to say.

"No doubt you know Margaret Daley has returned?"

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She nodded.

"I had dinner with her the day of her arrival. I wanted to test myself, Cornelia, wanted to be sure not a vestige of my former infatuation for her remained. I was assured at once. I would have come to you immediately to tell you how I love you, to beg you to marry me, but my sister insisted it would be better for me to wait a day or two. As though I needed to wait! As though I weren't sure!"

Incredulously Cornelia looked at him. He loved her, wanted to marry her! Dear Heaven, was this a wild sweet dream?

"I love you," he said, very low. "I wasn't sure at first, and yet I was always sure. It's you I love—only and entirely you. Cornelia, sweet, true, wonderful little girl, do you, can you care for me?"

Holding on to the back of a chair, she swayed a little, lifted her hands, stretched out her arms to him.

"You do care?" His voice was low and throbbing.

"I care so much, so terribly much!"

He looked at her shining eyes, and then his arms went around her. Her arms crept up around his neck, and she lifted her lips.

He bent his head, his lips seeking hers, dominant, compelling, victorious. For a long perfect moment, she was wrapped in ecstasy. After their first kiss she stepped back, luminous-eyed, exquisite. But as she stepped back, he followed her in the immemorial manner of men. His arms closed about her, and he kissed her again and again.

"Please—oh, Deering, it seems my heart is bursting with happiness! I never expected this. I never knew you cared—I can hardly realize. Oh, I love you so! Please let me realize——"

He released her then, tender in his triumph. She looked at him adoringly. How alive he was, how young and joyous and conquering. He loved her!

"Is it really true?" Her eyes clung to his.

"True as Heaven! This is my first real love, darling. I didn't know it then, but the other was only infatuation. My love for you is so different. It's tender; it wants to protect; it's deep as life; it's true; it's deathless."

She nodded. "I realize it now. It seemed dreamlike at first. Oh, dearest, do you know how happy I am? Can you know?"

Breathless, radiant, she went into his arms.

"My sister saw us together once, darling," Deering was saying in a low, tender voice. "She thinks you're lovely. She knew I was coming here to-night to ask you to marry me. She said she'd like us to be married—if you accepted me—in her Long Island home—a quiet wedding.

"There's a boat sailing for Europe in a couple of days. That will give us time to get passports. Will you marry me the day of the sailing so we can have our honeymoon on the boat? I want you to have a year in Europe. Don't make me wait. I'm so terribly lonely when I'm away from you!"

Cornelia lifted wonderful golden eyes to his.

"Yes, darling. We'll catch that boat," she breathed radiantly, and then gave herself up to the deep singing romance of his kiss.

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Fate's Stepchild

By Philip Fair

A Serial—Part V

CHAPTER IX.

ELISSA felt the rest of the afternoon as if she was moving about the house in a daze. Nothing seemed quite real to her: Marie's disappearance, Garrison's demand for a show-down.

Abby came in. She had heard about Marie on her way out. The town, she said, was alive with the news.

"Poor Marie!" said Abby. "I used to think she was a weak little thing for not snatching her happiness and defying everybody. I thought that was what I'd do. And now I don't. I can't. O I could have kept Bob—his family couldn't have taken him from me if I'd wanted to keep him anyhow, but I didn't want him that way! With Marie it was fear, with me it's pride—and in the end it all amounts to the same thing because neither of us are happy."

Elissa, who had intended to go on and tell her about Garrison and their trouble with him, stayed the words.

"Lucky thing, with all of these other things happening that we've at least got money," Abby went on. "Sometimes I think we just weren't meant to be happy—that we were born under evil stars or something of the sort."

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"Don't say that, Abby honey. There aren't any evil stars. We've been happy and I don't suppose we're having any more trouble than a lot of other people —only things seem so terrible when they're really happening to you."

The while she was trying to bolster up her courage to the point where she could tell Abby that soon they might not even have their money.

But she couldn't. And she knew as she looked at her lovely younger sister, made even more lovely by the tragedy that had marked her young life, that she couldn't let anything further happen to shadow her; she couldn't, no matter what the sacrifice it might require of her.

And yet, at the thought of Garrison she shuddered.

She couldn't tell Abby. Perhaps something might happen so that it would never be necessary that she know.

Sanders passed on the terrace and Elissa half rose with the intention of going after her and telling her that her services were no longer needed and then thought better of the matter. She would see Mr. Rand first. Perhaps it was best to keep Sanders right there where they could reach her especially since the damage had been done and there was nothing more the girl could do because she was not apparently a petty thief in any sense. She regretted then that she had not gone to Rand immediately.

Richard came in a few minutes later, his face haggard, his eyes burning with a sort of haunted light.

Elissa knew without asking him that he had found no trace of Marie. She said nothing but moved quietly to him and put her hand in his.

"If anything has happened to her, I'll feel as if—I'd killed her," he said finally in a hoarse, strained voice.

"You mustn't feel that way."

"But I can't help it! You don't know what it is to love some one so much that your life isn't complete without her!"

Elissa writhed inwardly at his words —she didn't know what love meant! She didn't know! She felt for a moment like screaming at him that she knew what love meant, love unreturned, love scorned, love scoffed at! She knew the torture of all of that while he, at least, had been loved in return. He had known the sweetness of that, while she had known only the bitterness of love unrequited.

But instead she stood quietly, looking at him compassionately, trying to comfort him.

"If she hadn't loved me, if I never let her think of love between us, she'd still be well, at home and happy!" Richard went on.

"But she followed her heart, Richard, honey, and that's the only way to happiness for a woman. If Marie was here right now, with all she's gone through, and you asked her if she'd rather go back to her home and girlhood or stay with you and know all of this suffering all over again, I reckon you'd find her saying she'd stay."

"Perhaps, but that isn't it, Lissa! It's that I wanted her to be so happy. I wanted my love to be something wonderful in her life, to sort of glorify it with a magic and everlasting happiness and I've done nothing but cause her trouble and suffering."

"Women get used to suffering for their men, Richard. They've been doing it since the beginning of time and I guess they'll be doing it all of the rest of their lives. The big thing is to have some one—to suffer for." The last came in a very low tone, a not quite steady tone and Elissa was glad that Richard was too engrossed in his own affairs to notice her change of tone.

"What are they doing now—I mean in the search?" Elissa asked finally as Richard paced up and down the living room.

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He stopped in front of her.

"I've told them to drag the pond. There isn't a chance in the world—there can't be—but I've got to know that every inch of our land and the land between here and Chillicothe has been scoured."

"No," Elissa said thoughtfully. "I'm sure there couldn't be a chance of that." And she shuddered with the memory of that other night when tragedy had hung over their pond.

They were a quiet little group at dinner that night and they started and stared at each other, their faces white and strained, when the telephone rang.

Elissa rose to answer it and the other two followed her and hung desperately on her words.

"What was it? Quick, Elissa, have they word of her?" Richard's voice was tense.

"They've found a farmer who thinks he picked her up on the outskirts of the village and carried her this way until he turned off at a side road. She got out there and he supposes it was to come on in this direction."

"My heavens! Picking up rides with strangers! Almost anything might have happened to her!"

"I know, Richard, almost anything might and then again it might not—it's only the bad lift-givers that we read of. Thousands of them are all right and have no motive further than giving the aid they offer."

"Sometimes you drive me crazy with your Pollyanna stuff—always seeing the good side!" Richard turned on Elissa fiercely.

"But some one has to, Richard," she replied quietly. "If we all lost our heads——" And then she smiled gently instead of finishing. "Who knows, this may mean that Marie is just resting somewhere and will be here soon—don't always take the shadowy side, Dick, honey!"

He grasped that thought eagerly. Perhaps Marie has just stopped, safely somewhere on the way, perhaps she would be with them any minute.

"If I only knew—if I could meet her! Oh, if I could meet her!" Elissa heard in his voice the great longing that her own heart had known and she pitied him.

And then plunging to the depths of despair, he continued:

"But she'd be here if something hadn't happened to her! Nothing could keep her from me,—nothing! O Elissa, I know something has happened to her! I know it. And if it has—I'll kill them. I'll kill the people who have done this to us! She was my wife, Elissa, they hadn't any right to keep her from me! They hadn't any right to do what they've done. They've killed her! They've killed her!"

"Richard, you mustn't," Elissa implored, fearing almost for her brother's reason. "She may come now any moment and will need you—need all of your comfort and strength and tenderness. Don't upset yourself so. Marie is all right. Why, Richard, can't you see that it just can't be any other way? God couldn't be so forgetful of you that he won't give you and Marie your chance for happiness. She's somewhere and all right. She'll come to you, Richard, I know she will."

But Elissa's heart ached. She wasn't as sure as the words sounded. She tried desperately to cling to her belief that whatever was, was somehow right, but it was hard when things went so wrong.

It was nearly eight o'clock. The fragrant silence of midsummer evening had settled over the room in which Richard and Elissa sat, the former with his pale face tense and his dark eyes seeming verily to burn.

Elissa, her nerves strained almost to the breaking point, undecided whether or not to tell Richard about Garrison, rose occasionally and pretended to interest herself in the arrangement of

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some piece of furniture or bric-a-brac. She stood, her fingers idly playing with a bouquet of roses from her garden, the soft black chiffon sleeves of her gown falling back from the clear white skin of her arms, the clinging black draperies of her skirt moving slightly in the breeze that came in the French window, when the sharp, quick ringing of the front doorbell made her turn around, her own face white and startled, to face the whiter and more startled Richard.

She thought first of Garrison. It was probably he coming for his answer. And she had none for him! Love him she knew she didn't and never could, but she wondered how much she could suffer for the sake of knowing that those two who were so dear to her could go on having the wealth and luxury that meant so much to them.

"It must be word!" Richard was on his feet immediately and starting toward the door.

"Oh, wait! Wait! I can't stand it just yet!" Elissa heard her own voice in that faint, pleading cry. "Tell him that——"

But Richard, not hearing her, too intent upon his own interests, was out of sight in the hall and Elissa stood silently staring ahead of her waiting, as if it were for her own doom, for the moment when she would have to answer Garrison.

She heard steps in the hall and as they neared they seemed to be repeating over and over the one word that her consciousness held—yes—yes—yes!

She would have to do it. She would have to say "Yes" to Garrison. It was the only thing she could do. She couldn't take from Abby and Richard all of the happiness that was left to them. And after all—what did her life matter? The one thing that would have made it matter was impossible, why not then let it serve its best purpose—that of keeping for her brother and sister the inheritance that had so fortunately come to them?

She heard the word: "Yes! Yes!" echoing on her own lips and then saw Richard, his face deathlike and terrible as she had never seen it before, appear in the door.

"They've found——" and his strained voice gave way. He could say nothing more.

"Richard, what is it?" Suddenly galvanized to action she went to him and gripped his hands.

"They've found a body in the pond, Miss Elissa." It was the gardener who spoke. He had followed Richard in and stood awkwardly waiting for Elissa's answer.

"Bring it in here," she heard herself say in a voice that was scarcely audible and then turned back to Richard, and heard, only faintly, the gardener's steps on the gravel as he went back toward the pond and its tragic burden.

Richard stood staring straight ahead of him, uttering no sound. Elissa looked up at him, more frightened than she would have been if he had been loud in his grief. There was something terrible about his silence, something terrible about the way his eyes stared straight ahead of him, something terrible about the way he let her lead him to a big chair and sat down there, wordlessly, nonresistantly, almost like a child.

"O Richard, I can't believe it yet!" Her voice weighted with tender compassion brought no response from him, no sign of having heard. "God couldn't be so cruel! He couldn't! She's so young and so lovely—oh, it just can't be. Somehow they must be wrong. They must be!"

She felt her own body grow cold at the thought of little Marie with her wide eyes and her pale skin, baffled by life, beating futilely against it with her small, helpless hands and then suffering such tragic defeat.

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She wondered vaguely while she spoke to Richard, trying to comfort him, how it had happened. She must have come in from one of the back roads and in crossing the lawns at night had walked into the water and been unable to get out. They should have had men out there with searchlights. She blamed herself for having been so careless.

She heard steps on the gravel path, slow steps, and knew that the men were coming, bringing with them their sad, silent burden.

She motioned to a servant who passed to open the door for them and take them into the library. She had the feeling that she could not endure seeing the form of Marie, who had always been so happy, so gay, so lovely, still in death and perhaps marred by the mud from the bottom of the pond.

Richard made no move to the library after the men had gone. A deeper and more terrible silence seemed to settle over him with every passing moment and Elissa grew alarmed. She wondered if his reason was tottering.

She knew that she should telephone Marie's mother but she feared what would happen when that woman came rushing to their home, as she surely would do. She would wait, she decided, for an hour or two until she saw what turn Richard took.

Meantime there was a doctor to be called and Mr. Rand. Elissa felt that the presence of the kindly old attorney who had known and loved her mother would be a sort of stay during that terrible hour.

Elissa turned from the telephone, her hands verily trembling with the effort that she had made to control her voice and keep it calm, to face Abby, wild-eyed and frightened.

"Who is it? Who have you got there?" Abby asked, in a voice that shook with its burden of fright.

Elissa started. She wondered what horrible thing had happened that made Abby ask that question—Abby who had known Marie so well.

"You've been in there?" she asked in a haunted voice, pointing to the library.

"Yes, but who is it?, Lissa, what's happened? O Lissa, has some one been killed? Oh, why didn't you tell me so that I wouldn't have walked in there that way! It makes me feel as if —as if I was going through it all again! The water, suffocating me, stifling me— Lissa, I'm afraid, Lissa!"

And Elissa, distracted herself, found herself facing the task of quieting the hysterical Abby. She was glad, though, to have so much of duty press in upon her just then. It kept her from thinking too much, it kept her from being too haunted by the things that had happened.

"Abby, honey, you mustn't feel like that. You knew Marie so well in life, you shouldn't——"

"Marie?" Abby broke in, her dark eyes staring wildly up at her sister. "Why, that's not Marie! It's—why there's nothing like Marie about her. How could you have made such a mistake!"

Elissa stared at Abby, wondering if she, too, was taking leave of her senses.

Abby seemed to realize something of what was going on in her sister's brain.

"But it isn't Marie, Lissa! I tell you you've made a mistake! It isn't Marie! Come—you must see!"

And she allowed the younger girl to take her across the hall to the library. Elissa stood staring at what she saw there in a sort of stark terror.

Instead of the slim, fragile figure of Marie she saw the body of a much larger woman, tall, a figure that must have been imposing in life, with a face that was beautiful in a stately, dignified way. Black hair, a wealth of it, lay back from the wide brow.

Elissa was held to the spot by a sort of horrible fascination. She was sure

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that the woman was some one she had never seen before and yet she could not dismiss a feeling of familiarity about her. Something about the features arrested and held her attention, that quiet, composed dignity, even in death, that struck a familiar chord in Elissa's consciousness.

"Who is it?" she heard Abby's words, in a haunted, chilled voice.

"I don't know—they found her—in our pond." It was difficult for Elissa to speak, so startled was she.

So weird and horrible a thing capping a day that had been filled with emotion-racking experiences, made Elissa wonder if she could believe her own eyes, if she could trust herself. She half felt that her senses might be tricking her, that she might suddenly have gone mad and be imagining things that could never happen.

She turned to Abby dazedly.

"Abby," she said in a tortured voice, "is it real? Or am I imagining something? Are you real? Are you really telling me that isn't Marie or have I gone mad?"

Elissa felt the younger girl's hands turn her gently and lead her from the

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"If anything has happened to her, I'll feel as if—I'd killed her," he said finally in a hoarse, strained voice.

room and then heard her speaking, as if she had suddenly become the older of the two.

"Poor Lissa! Poor Lissa, honey! I don't wonder you think you've gone mad, because all of this has hit you hardest. You've had to stand things for both of us. Dick and I—we're a couple of weaklings compared with you. But you aren't mad, darlingest, and—— Does Dick know?"

"He thinks it's Marie."

"Then we'll have to tell him! Think of what that will mean to him!"

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Elissa roused a little at that. Perhaps after all she had not been wrong in believing that somehow lovely, fragile little Marie would be spared for her happiness with Richard.

They went in to Richard to tell him. At first he stared at them unbelievingly and then his eyes lighted, but quickly shadowed.

"What does it matter, what does anything matter if she hasn't been found?" he asked in a tortured voice.

The doctor came and said the strange woman, with her austere beauty whose motionless body lay in the Rhodes library, had been dead not more than a day, probably less.

Rand came, quietly glad to see Elissa, his eyes resting on her grief-stricken, horror-marked face with an almost fatherly compassion.

He spoke slowly and quietly and seemed to Elissa like a stay in that troublous time.

He looked at the dead woman long. When he came out of the library he stood for a moment, while Elissa and Abby waited eagerly for his words.

"If you don't mind I'd like to have her remain here for the night—I've taken the liberty of calling the undertaker. I'm not ready to make any definite statements," he said, "but I'm not sure that I do not recognize her."

And strangely, though a thousand questions crowded to Elissa's mind she asked none of them. There was something too final about Rand's manner in spite of his gentility and kindliness.

Rand had left to return to his own home for the night when Alfred Garrison was announced and appeared before Elissa, a little bit breathless and his grooming not quite the neat perfection that it generally was.

"I was detained," he explained, speaking a bit nervously. "I'm sorry to have been late, Elissa. I hope——"

"Please don't apologize," Elissa broke in. "So much has been happening here that it isn't a place you'll want to stay in long anyhow. Won't you let your answer go until to-morrow? I'm too upset just now to think sanely. If I say either 'Yes' or 'No' to you I may regret it greatly later on. Will you please grant me that favor?"

"I—why, certainly, if you wish it. But what has happened?" And Elissa wondered if he seemed agitated.

"Shall I show you?" She led the way toward the library, and wondered a little as she did so why she troubled to explain to him and show him what had happened. "This woman was found dead in our pond to-night. Mr. Rand asks that she be allowed to stay here until to-morrow. We thought at first it was Marie. We——"

But her words were interrupted by a sharp sound from Garrison and Elissa looked up at him to see him ghastly pale, his eyes horror-stricken and his whole being seeming to tremble as if with a terrible fear.

He turned and rushed out of the room, Elissa following, staring at him strangely.

"I'm sorry," he said agitatedly. "I—the sight of the dead always does that to me! I can't stand to look at a dead body! I'll—I'll go now—if you'll excuse me."

And before Elissa could answer he had moved toward the door, an abject, cringing figure. Elissa stood long staring after him wonderingly. He had seemed anxious to leave her, eager to vanish from her presence and the fear that had paled his face and stricken his limbs had seemed to be a terrible thing.

It was strange, thought Elissa, that a strong man should tremble so in the presence of death.

But she was relieved that she had been given another day of grace, another night before she need give him the only answer that she could.

She knew as she stood there in the presence of that awful tragedy that had

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taken all of the light of happiness out of her brother's eyes that she could not take from him even the little that was left him, the assurance of physical comfort and plenty for the rest of his life.

And yet, sometimes her spirit flared high. She could fight! Her claim was as good as his! And with Mr. Rand to help her—and yet, why fight? Why risk it? What was there after all for her since love had looked on her and then passed her by?

CHAPTER X.

The night seemed endless to the three young people, each in their separate part of the house, each with his mind and heart busy and burdened with a separate grief that still had much in common.

Elissa lay staring into the darkness, hearing the soft sounds of the summer night coming in at the window, birds, nesting in the heavy vine that clung to the side of the house, twittering sleepily, the breeze rustling the long strands of a weeping willow that lifted its fountain of delicate green near by, and the soft murmur of insects and night creatures.

She was unutterably weary but sleep eluded her. Too many things had happened during the last few weeks to allow her brain to rest; it clung to the problems that confronted her, wrestled with them until she was exhausted.

Once she thought she heard the voice of a woman and started from her bed to stand at the window peering out into the shadows and waiting for a repetition of the sound. None came and she knew that she had only been imagining, but she stood at the window staring down the hill toward a shadow that nestled darkly in the valley and it seemed to her that an almost tangible flood of loneliness passed over her, leaving her breathless and with tear-filled eyes.

She finally went back to bed, chiding herself for her moment of weakness.

She was up with the dawn, pale, wide-eyed and tense. She had the feeling of waiting for something and started from her chair at the breakfast table when steps sounded out on the terrace.

"You're all nerves, Lissa," Abby said as she looked up from her grapefruit.

And then a little cry escaped her lips. Bob Tyson had appeared in one of the French windows.

"May I come in?" he asked. He was trying to smile but there was something tense, purposeful in his manner.

"Certainly, Bob," Elissa murmured, while Abby sat and stared, her dark eyes shining and a sudden flush of red coloring her cheek.

"Abby—I've got to see you—alone!" Bob said and Elissa, quite as if she had expected some such thing, rose and walked from the room. There was no surprise in her manner—she felt that she was beyond surprise. She didn't even wonder what Bob wanted—coming at such an hour and evidently in such a hurry.

But Abby, still in the dining room, was on her feet.

"Bob, something's happened?" There was alarm in her rich young voice while she spoke to him as if they had parted only the day before.

"Something has happened, Abby, that's why I've come to you. I couldn't endure the thought of your bearing it alone, Abby darling!"

"Why, Bob"—holding him away when he would have taken her in his arms, but only so that she could look wonderingly into his face—"what do you mean? It's not I that's having trouble, you know—it's poor Dick."

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Abby, and you're the bravest little thing in the world to take it this way!" And his arms that had ached for her claimed

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her and she felt them trembling as they crushed her against his heart.

"Bob honey," her voice was tremulous with emotion and muffled against his shoulder, "I don't know what you're talking about but I don't care so long as it's brought you back to me, back so that I can feel the sweet pressure of your arms and—your lips." The last very low, while his lips met hers in a kiss.

He held her so, long; it was as if, having her again in his arms he intended never to let her go. There was something young and eager and intense about him as he talked.

"Abby, I know what's happened. You needn't try to be brave about it honey girl. One of your maids told one of ours, at their dance last night, and it's spread like wildfire. It was the first thing I heard when I went to the stables this morning—about your having to get out of here and give the place to that fellow Garrison. I've always hated him! Always until now, but maybe now I've got something to thank him for, because perhaps if you'd never been liable to be up against it I'd never have discovered just how much you do mean to me. Why, Abby honey, when I heard that you were going to be made unhappy I just didn't care what the folks thought or did. Family to blazes! What we need is new and different blood and anyhow, I love you and now I'm here and have you and I'm never going to let you go!"

"But, Bob, I don't understand what you're talking about," Abby said, when finally she could speak again. "I don't know anything like that."

"Abby, are you spoofing me? I mean are you giving me a sleigh ride just to see what I'm made of? Because you needn't, I'm so sure this time that come what will you're mine!"

"I'm not kidding, Bob. I'm just—all in the dark. I don't know what you're talking about, haven't the faintest idea."

And then, convinced of her earnestness, Bob Tyson told her what he had heard from the servants in his father's house that morning and that they had heard it from a maid in the Rhodeses' household. He told her what Elissa already knew but had been keeping from her brother and sister, told her everything except the one fact that even Sanders had not known—that Garrison was waiting before pressing his cause until he had Elissa's answer to his proposal of marriage.

"Oh, that can't be true, Bob. Why it just can't! Elissa would have told us! I'll ask her now—she'll tell you!"

And she hurried through the house in search of Elissa only to find when she discovered her that what Bob had told her was quite true.

"But it can't be. Why, Mr. Rand looked up our claim!" she protested.

"Yes, he did," said Elissa quietly. "And he'll fight this thing out for us. I'm going to put it in his hands this morning, Abby. I won't be driven! We can fight and hold what we know is ours."

Strength had seemed to come to her with the light of another day, a calm strength that gave her confidence that she could fight Garrison's claim and win. There was no use of giving in when one was in the right—good never came of that, she thought.

And besides, she would rather have died than marry a man she did not love. Not even for those who were most dear to her could she do that. Her heart had been given irrevocably. That it was not treasured and cherished made no difference—except in the poignancy of the ache that tortured it.

Abby went back to Bob Tyson.

"It's true," she said in a very small voice.

"Abby darling!" And once more his arms claimed her. "This had to come, dear, so that I'd know how much I loved you and that I really couldn't live

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without you. Abby, honey, I love you! It's been torture—this not seeing you all these weeks and months."

"And if it's been torture to you what do you think it's been to me?" Abby asked, her voice deep and colorful with emotion. "But, Bob, I'm afraid—this makes things still worse for me. I'm still the girl connected with that scandal last winter and now I'll probably be penniless besides. Your family'll never accept me now. And you'll be miserable

A little cry escaped her lips. Bob Tyson had appeared in one of the French windows.

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separated from them. We Southerners need our own so much, Bob."

"I know"—his young face white and his voice tense—"breaking with mother and dad would be one of the hardest things I could ever be asked to do. There's no use denying that, Abby, but breaking with you was harder. There've been times when it seemed to me it wasn't worth trying to go on living, days when I've wanted you so madly that I've felt like throwing the whole thing over and coming to you—but the trouble was I hadn't anything to offer you then, Abby."

"You wouldn't need anything to offer me. Why, Bob, I'd marry you and start out with you if we were both penniless and I'd have to slave and work hard for you."

He held her close, kissing her with lips that trembled with a strong emotion.

"Precious," he said finally when he dared trust his voice to speak. "But it won't be that way, honey. Grandmother Tyson's with us—she believes in love more than she does in family and she owns half of dad's business, you know. Of course, I won't stay on with him if he doesn't want me—I couldn't do that but I'm not a fool, Abby. Other fellows without much experience have supported wives and if they can—why, with you to work for, honey, I'd ought to be a coupon clipper in two or three years! Those other fellows haven't you, you know!"

"It's almost too good to be true, Bob—you're coming to me like this. I hardly dare believe that it's really happened and yet, somehow, I always felt that it would happen. I just couldn't believe that anything could keep us apart when we'd loved so much. And Bob"—her voice lowered and she hesitated as if she found what she would say too difficult.

"What is it, honey?" He laid his cheek against her soft dark hair.

"Bob, you really don't believe that there ever was anything between——" Once more she hesitated as if she dreaded speaking the name that she must.

"Abby, don't!" came the quick, but tender protest from Tyson. "Don't! I never really doubted you, honey. I'd just been brought up with that one idea—that women who came into the Tyson family must come stainlessly. Well, I still believe that but my ideas of stains have changed. I know that there are stains that no one ever sees and then there are things that seem to be blots on one's honor that really aren't. I know, Abby, just from looking into your pure, lovely eyes that you've been good and pure and that the Tyson women will be honored when you become one of them."

"Bob! O Bob—it's almost too good to dare believe!"

"But you can, darling, even though I tremble in humility myself that you have been given back to me. It seems, to me too, almost too wonderful to be real."

And shaking off, with the ease of youth and the preoccupation of love the air of tragedy that held the old house in its chilling grip they walked out into the sun of that late summer morning, their hearts athrill with the sweetness of the emotion that enveloped them.

They planned as they walked along the sun-warmed path and stopped every now and then while their lips met in a kiss.

In the house, Elissa waited with a sort of nervous eagerness for the appearance of Rand and was startled when she saw him stop his car in front of the door to find that he was not alone. There was another man with him.

She stared and then her face whitened and her hands trembled while all of the warm blood in her veins seemed to turn to ice.

"I've brought Mr. Lansing with me,"

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Rand explained quietly. "I want him to see the body in your library—if you do not mind."

Elissa tried to speak but found that she could not command her voice. She gestured toward the library and then moved out of sight. Lansing had walked on with Rand as if he had not seen her after his formal and rather preoccupied greeting.

The house was still, so still that the very silence seemed alive. Elissa waited in the living room wondering vaguely why Ford Lansing should have come to their house at such a time.

Finally she heard steps in the hall, the front door closed and then Rand appeared.

"Just as I thought," he said, quietly, "She belongs to—Lansing."

"Belongs to him? But I thought he lived alone?" Elissa was startled.

"Yes. So did most folks," came thoughtfully from Rand, as though he spoke with mental reservation.

Elissa waited for him to go on, but Rand offered nothing more in the way of explanation.

"He's sending for the body immediately, of course. Better tell one of the servants to be on hand to take care of details, there's no reason why you should be disturbed. You've had about all you can stand for one little girl. Wonder what the latest news is on your brother's wife?"

"There isn't any," Elissa said quietly, while she wanted to ask a thousand questions of Rand about Ford Lansing and the woman who lay so still in that other room.

She wanted to rush at Rand and beg him to tell her the truth but she couldn't. She had humiliated herself once. She couldn't again. She could only sit there, like some one whose senses had been numbed.

Rand approached her and touched her hand. He seemed to sense the fact that she was near the breaking point.

"Better get some rest," he said. "We can't have you breaking down on our hands now."

She looked up at him, suddenly conscious of the fact that there was something she had wanted to talk to him about—Garrison and the stolen birth certificates and the dismissal of Sanders.

"By all means dismiss the girl if you are uncomfortable with her about—and as for Garrison, you're in the house, and in possession of the property, my dear girl. I've kept duplicates of everything—photographed duplicates—so we would have very little trouble proving our case if Garrison opens it again. It's true enough that we've never been able to find a record of your mother's marriage, because we don't know where she was married—but I knew Carolyn Garrison." For a moment he ceased speaking as if held in the grip of a strong emotion.

And then, patting Elissa's hand confidently, he went on:

"Don't worry, we'll be bad medicine for that young man if he starts anything! Now take my advice and drop the troubles of others off of your shoulders and get some rest!"

Elissa stood at the window watching his car roll down the drive and then was held motionless by a figure that she thought she saw moving in the shrubbery. She stood watching fascinated and then, started out across the terrace, running madly, a glad little cry on her lips.

"Marie! O Marie!" Her strong young arms encircled the other girl.

"Lissa," came weakly from Marie. "Lissa—at last—I thought I'd never get here!"

Eagerly, anxiously, tenderly, Elissa helped the girl into the house and sent one of the servants for Richard to carry her upstairs while some one else telephoned for a physician.

While she undressed the weary, ill

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young wife Elissa quieted her calls for Richard.

"He's right here, honey—right here helping me get you into bed—see?"

And Richard, his hands trembling so that they were utterly useless, his voice breaking so with emotion that he dared not speak, stood looking on, awed at the miracle of Marie's appearance. He had sunk into a sort of resigned, dazed stupor and found it almost impossible to believe that his lovely young wife was really there, before him, with all of her loveliness unmarred, really enhanced by her weariness, and her happiness at being near the man she loved again.

The doctor came.

"It's been a strain," he said. "A risky one but she's young and most of all she wants to live. If she's given the right care she'll probably pull through."

"Don't spare anything—anything!" Richard said, following him downstairs to the door.

When he came back Elissa, who had been watching at the bedside, left quietly. It was no place for her—the hour belonged to Richard and Marie alone.

She walked out to the terrace. The faint sound of voices came to her—Abby and Bob.

Noiselessly she moved back into the house and on up to her own room to stand for a while at her window, looking through the soft afternoon light toward the house down the hill.

Ford Lansing was there, keeping silent and lonely vigil with his dead. Elissa's heart ached for him. And yet, she knew that he did not want her sympathy. He had spurned it, thrown it back upon herself.

Later that evening Elissa looked in on Marie and Richard. It had been a harrowing day for them. At word from Elissa, Mrs. Stanley had come rushing, tearful and upset to the bedside of her daughter, to encounter there the stern cold eyes of Richard Rhodes, eyes that seemed to accuse her.

"If—anything happens," he had said in a hoarse strained voice, "it will have been your fault—you will have killed her!"

And Mrs. Stanley had shrunk back as if from an actual blow.

"Don't," she begged. "Have mercy! Can't you see that I've suffered enough?"

"But you didn't care when I was suffering!"

"Don't, Richard honey," came softly from Marie and at the sound of her voice he seemed to forget everything else in the world, to forget the elderly woman who looked on in awe at so great a love and then tiptoed out of the room.

"You know, honey"—Marie had opened her eyes to say then when they were alone—"nothing's going to happen to me."

"I pray God that it isn't!" came hoarsely from the man who knelt beside her.

"Why, it just couldn't. I've got to be here with you now. I had to be, I couldn't have gone through this without you, I kept thinking that all the while while I was coming here—and now that I'm here, why everything is all right."

Richard kissed her soft ash-blond hair and then said tenderly:

"Try to rest, dear—you need to sleep."

But Marie wanted to talk.

"You know I'd never dared climb but I got down that trellis just as easy—I did fall at the end when it broke, but somehow it didn't hurt me. And then when I got out on the road I got a ride with a farmer. I didn't dare let just any one coming along see me enough to recognize me because I was afraid I'd be picked up and taken back home. I spent the night in a little cabin with some people who were just too

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"Lissa," came weakly from Marie. "Lissa—at last—I thought I'd never get here!"

sweet to me for words." She smiled as if at the memory of a stranger's kindness.

"When I'm well, Dick, we must go there, you and I, and do something for them. And then to-day I came on here—by back ways. I didn't dare take the main road or trust to rides from any one but backwoods farmers who might not have read the papers!"

"Darling!" The one word came through the maze of emotion that flooded Richard Rhodes's being.

"I thought I'd never get here—to your arms. Hold me tight—Dick darling, tight."

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And it was so that Elissa found them when she looked in that evening.

She spent a while going over her household accounts and servants' salaries, figured what she owed Sanders and then sent for the girl.

No one seemed to know where she was and Elissa herself finally went to the girl's room to look for her.

The room was empty and had the air of having been deserted.

A scrap of paper lay on the dressing table. Elissa picked it up and found that it was addressed to her and signed by Sanders.

I knew that you'd fire me, so I've gone before you could. I broke the window, but I didn't know that Alfred was going to steal anything valuable from you. You may not believe it, but I could have liked you if Alfred hadn't paid so much attention to you. We quarreled over you before the dance last night, and I thought he'd never come back to me, but he has. I really didn't want any of your money, and I'm glad that you are going to be able to keep it. I've saved up enough to start us in a little business. It was a lucky thing he saw that woman in your library—fright sometimes serves a purpose. Funny that he should be so afraid of the dead!

That was all there was to it. Elissa felt, after reading it twice, that she didn't quite understand, that all she did know was that Sanders was gone and with Garrison, and that Garrison had been so frightened by the presence of death that he had not dared go on with his plans.

Elissa smiled a little over it—a bitter wraith of a smile, and yet she felt she had much to be thankful for. Abby and Richard had their desires and their lives could go on as they were.

She knew a strange sense of relief that Sanders was no longer in the house.

She slept the deep, sound sleep of utter exhaustion that night for the first in many. A load had been lifted from her. There was nothing more she need worry about. Her way lay straight and clear before her—a simple, lonely way.

Abby and Bob, oblivious of the rest of the world in their own happiness, went away one sun-kissed September morning in the car and came back married, Bob flushed and happy, Abby starry-eyed. They went immediately to live in Granny Tyson's big house.

"But I'll come back to you often, Lissa," she said, clinging to Elissa a moment before she stepped back into the car and was swept away with her happy young husband.

Richard's whole life centered around the upstairs room where Marie was. The day came when doctors and nurses hurried about the place, noiselessly but with a peculiar tenseness and Richard paced the hall.

It was midnight and his nerves were ragged before he was finally called in and heard Marie's low voice speaking his name:

"Richard, honey, we'll call him after you—don't you know I told you everything'd be all right?"

And he thrilled to the weight of his own young son in his arms and the miracle of Marie's lovely face, more fragile than ever, smiling at him.

Elissa felt almost like an interloper, the house was so completely turned over to Richard, Jr. But she would not have had it otherwise.

She was walking one day in early fall, alone, as she usually did, along the woodland path that had become a sort of shrine to her during the time that she had lived in her ancestral home, when she heard a sound of rustling leaves and moving twigs and had scarcely turned when a great dog bounded toward her, recognition plain in his eyes and something eager about him.

"Bruno, old boy!" There was a full note in her voice, something of emotion, as she dropped to her knees and put her arms around the handsome animal's great shoulders and drew him

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toward her. "Oh, it's so good to see you—you're like an old friend."

Elissa was conscious of the fact that Bruno's tail was whipping the foliage back of him madly. She knew instantly what that must mean and rose, turned, stiffened for the formal greeting that she would murmur and then rush on toward home.

But as she faced Ford Lansing she found her hands suddenly caught and held warmly.

"Elissa!" His voice was warm with emotion. "Bruno has found you again for me! Elissa! Elissa—mine!"

And in spite of all of her pride, in spite of all of the decisions she had made about how coolly she would treat Ford Lansing when next she met him, Elissa found herself in his arms, resting there unresistingly, glad of their strong comfort.

"Elissa, my darling!" Lansing murmured against her soft hair.

And then suddenly she began to struggle away from him, fiercely, madly.

"Don't! Let me go!" she cried. "Oh, I'm—such a fool—to let this happen again! Let me go and don't ever touch me again—don't speak to me again—ever! I hate you for this, for trapping me into a betrayal of my feelings again! I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"

The while, in spite of her struggles he held her and his voice, when he spoke was surpassingly tender.

"Elissa darling, I know. You have a right to say all of that to me. You have a right to blame me bitterly and to distrust me, but can't you find it in your heart to forgive, dear? To forgive a very lonely man and take him into the warmth of your love?"

Still struggling she would have spoken but his lips, fiercely eager, silenced her words with passionate kisses.

"Don't talk, dear. Don't say anything, Elissa, until I have told you this." He stopped for a moment. His face tensed. She felt the arms that held her grow a trace rigid and his face seemed to whiten slightly in his effort to control his emotion. Then:

"The girl who was drowned in your pond was my sister, two years my senior. She ran away and married Alfred Garrison—he wanted her for the money he thought she would have; he couldn't ever have loved any one. It wasn't in him. Their life together was miserably unhappy. They quarreled bitterly and one day when they were walking on our land that runs up back of yours she fell or he pushed her into the stream that feeds your lake—it's quite deep there.

"We all supposed that she was drowned—her body wasn't found but the hat she wore was and it was thought by most people that the body must have been sucked down into one of the treacherously deep, seemingly bottomless holes in the stream bed, but I knew better, Elissa. She came in that night—after having hidden till dark in the shrubbery on the other side of the stream—and had been a maniac since. She said Garrison tried to kill her, that he pushed her in—well, whether he did or not he might as well have killed her. It has been my vigil through the years since to keep her from putting herself out of the way. The day that she got out and went to your lake the housekeeper left the door of her apartment open—and you know the rest.

"I've been a bitter man, a hard man because I've lived with that terrible tragedy since. I wanted to keep her secret—I couldn't have the neighbors, people who'd known her when she was sane and one of the most beautiful girls around here, see her and know of her condition. I thought it was best when I found she had sneaked back into the house after every one had supposed her drowned, to just let it go on that way. Mr. Rand is the only one who knew,

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and he knew this time when she disappeared and knew that I had been looking for her.

"And so that was why I felt I couldn't ask you to marry me, Elissa, even though I loved you beyond the power of words to tell you. I couldn't drag another person into the shadowed unhappy life that I was living. It's been a lonely life, Elissa. And not until to-day have I felt I could come to you and ask you to understand. Bruno and I were coming now."

And Elissa, as she listened, felt all of the bitterness leaving her, dropping away from her like an old cloak for which she had no further use.

Her hand touched Lansing's.

"I'm so sorry," she

He drew her to him in a passion of tenderness. "Elissa—my Elissa!"

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said, in a low voice that was not quite steady.

"To hear you say just that!" And he drew her to him in a passion of tenderness. "Elissa—my Elissa!"

They were silent for a space, while the minutes of that gorgeous September day moved on toward a warm, flower-scented twilight. And then Lansing spoke again:

"I've probably been a perfect fool—there were other things I could have done, but my sister was always so proud, I couldn't have had the neighbors know how life had broken her, better to have let it seem that she went out tragically. Strange that after all these years—we were both quite young then—she should have fulfilled the belief. But that is the way with life."

He shuddered as if a cold wind had struck him.

"Don't!" Elissa's eager hands were quick to caress him. "Don't think about it any more, Ford dear. It's been hard enough for you; surely you've earned every good thing that can come to you!"

"And all I ask is you, Elissa—give me your love and I ask nothing else of life," he replied earnestly, with a touch of reverence.

And she lifted her lips to him as if there was no need for words in reply.

"Then"—finally, in a voice that was a little tremulous—"Heaven grant that I can bless your life and make it more beautiful with all of the love of my own."

And that woodland path, where the shadows of a lovely September afternoon were lengthening into dim beauty, knew an hour of love surpassingly beautiful.

It was when they finally turned to go to Ford Lansing's home, of which Elissa, according to their plan was to be the mistress, that they looked down and saw Bruno, his huge shaggy back turned politely toward them.

"Good boy, Bruno!" Lansing said in a still husky voice and they both laughed happily as the dog rose and walked beside them toward the lovely old house down the hill.

THE END.

IF ALL THE SEAS

If all the seas should go to dust
  And all the mountains sunder,
It would be no more to me
  Than a moment's wonder.

What matter if the stars freeze,
  The sun fail in its place,
So long as your arms harbor me—
  My face against your face.

VERNE BRIGHT.

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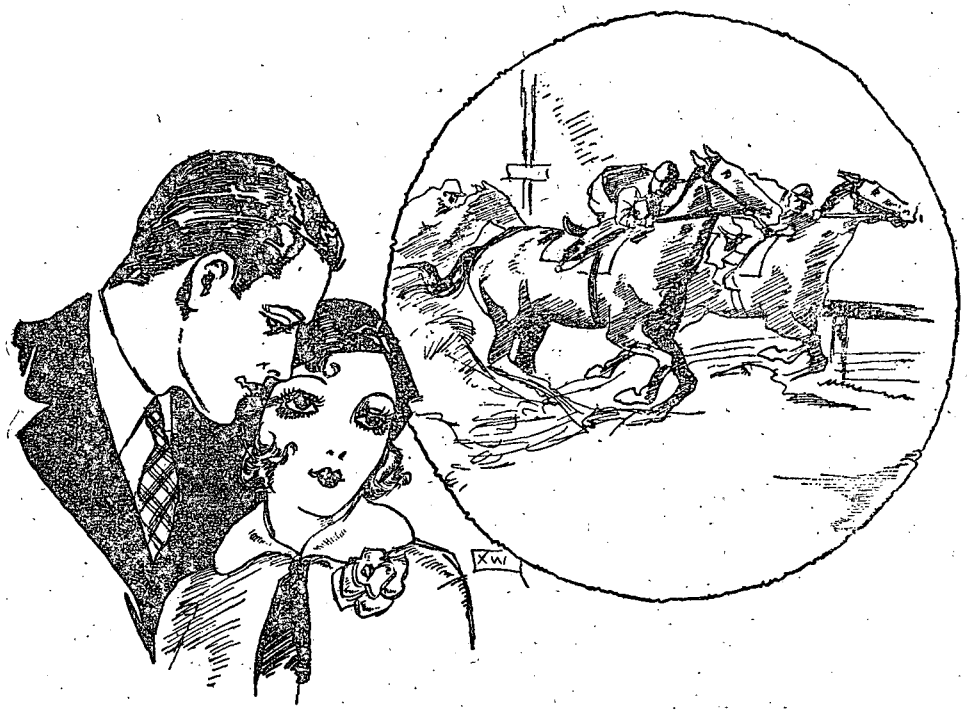

A Race For Happiness

By J. L. Morrissey

THE girl's an absolute fool to spend what must be her last cent in buying back that old plug, Brown Boy!"

"Well, at any rate she got him cheap enough, didn't she?" The speaker laughed and his companion joined in his mirth.

"I suppose she dreams of making him a winner again. The idea of hoping to win races with that old hack!"

The two men formed part of the crowd that had attended the sale of the racing stable that had belonged to old John Digby before he had disposed of it before his death, and both men were judges of horseflesh. As they watched the tall, pale girl take hold of the bridle of the brown horse and fondly pat his nose, both turned away, feeling somewhat ashamed of their previous comments. There seemed something so pathetic in the girl's flinging away what must mean much-needed money to buy back the horse that had once been the pride of the very famous Digby racing stable.

When the sale was over and the crowd had dwindled down to one or two idlers, Mavis Digby was still standing there with her purchase. Her thoughts were heavy, and were concerned not with the future but with the past. It seemed such a very short time since her father had been one of the most prosperous men on the turf. He had run his own colors in many a race, and Brown Bird, the mother of Brown Boy, had won for him celebrated victories.

Fortune had smiled on him persistently, and it had looked as though

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he might at length realize his ambition to keep the very finest stable in the country.

And then fickle Fortune had frowned, and her frown became as persistent as her smile had once been. It had all begun after the death of her mother, reflected Mavis sadly, as she stroked the twitching brown nose of the horse. Dad had seemed to go all to pieces after that. His judgment, hitherto sound to the point of genius, had begun to falter. He had plunged wildly and recklessly, putting his horses into races which they could never win, and the other owners had begun to discuss him among themselves. It was whispered that he had fallen into the practice of drinking alone, that he no longer followed the races with system and intelligence. He had lost race after race, and still he had not pulled himself together. With an aching heart Mavis watched the degeneration of what had once been a fine man, but she could not find it in her to remonstrate with him after the one occasion on which she had tried.

She well remembered the look of dumb misery in his eye, and she knew that he had not given a thought to what she had been saying. All his thoughts, waking and sleeping, were upon the woman—Mavis's mother—who had gone from him. After that the end had come quickly and inevitably. His fortune had dwindled away, and then he had died and had gone on to follow the woman he loved, leaving his daughter his debts and his reputation.

With the lion's share of what remained of her year's dress allowance, she had bought Brown Boy at the sale that day. Now she was left with the horse on her hands, and after to-night nowhere to keep him. She listlessly surrendered the bridle to a groom and watched the animal being led away for his last night in his old stable. Where he would lie the following night she did not know.

The inclosure was almost empty now, and Mavis moved off, intending to go back to the house and pack preparatory to moving out the next day, when she recognized a familiar figure. She quickened her step and walked toward him.

Roger Winter stopped and raised his hat at Mavis's approach. At one time he had been a close friend of her father's, and perhaps he could do something for her now. At any rate, it was worth trying.

"Good afternoon, Miss Digby," he said, holding his hat in one hand. "This sale was bad business, and I feel mighty sorry for you. I was amazed to think that poor John had come to this."

"Thank you, Mr. Winter," returned Mavis with a bitter smile. "Poor father is well out of it, thank Heaven! What I have to think about is my own future. Were you sufficiently friendly with my father for me to ask a favor of you?"

Roger Winter looked surprised at her words, but then his eyes glinted and he showed his teeth in a smile.

"Quite apart from any friendliness with your father, Miss Digby, it is enough that so pretty a girl as you should ask it!" And he bowed ever so slightly to her.

Mavis smiled coldly. She already regretted asking him, for she could see that he had been drinking.

"It's this, Mr. Winter. Moved by an impulse, I bought Brown Boy to-day, and after to-night I have nowhere to keep him. Would you take care of him at your place for a week or two, until I can make up my mind what to do with him?"

Roger Winter looked at the girl's pale face. They seemed quite alone in the inclosure except for the stable hands, and he took a quick step forward.

"I'll do it for a kiss from those pretty lips," he said boldly, and in a moment his arm was around the girl's shoulder and she was struggling in his grasp.

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"You cad!" she cried between clenched teeth, as she tried to free herself from his embrace. Her cheeks were flaming red and her fists were hammering on his chest. And then suddenly he had released her, and she saw him spinning to the ground.

Robin was standing by her side. Mavis clung to him, sobbing convulsively. Why hadn't she thought of Robin, before ever approaching that cad who sprawled on the grass?

"Get up and take some more of what you deserve!" snapped Robin, but Roger Winter knew when he had met a better man. Muttering beneath his breath, he rose to his feet and dusted himself deliberately. Then picking up his hat and setting it jauntily on his head, he walked toward the gate of the inclosure.

"No doubt you'll soon find some one who'll keep your horse for nothing, my dear Miss Digby," he called back from the gate, and Robin clenched his fist and took a step in his direction.

But Mavis laid her hand on his arm.

"Never mind, Robin," she said with a smile. "He's nothing. Let him go. Tell me how you came to be here just in time."

She had known Robin Maynard since the days when they had been youngsters together, and she felt a glow steal over her at the thought that she still had one true friend left in the world. He had been away for over a year up North, and this was the first time she had seen him since his return. She tucked her arm affectionately into his, and together they walked back to the house, he talking as they went.

"I've come home for good now, Mavis. Dad wants me to manage his stables. He says he's getting too old to take an active interest in the establishment. I just got back to-day, and as soon as I heard the news I rushed straight over here. I'm sorry, Mavis. Why didn't you let me know earlier?"

"It was no use, Robin," said Mavis, looking away from him. "You couldn't have done anything. It was just—circumstances."

"But I can do something now. I heard what you said to that scoundrel, and I want you to let me take care of Brown Boy for the time being." He spoke as though he were eager to do anything for the girl at his side, no matter what it was.

"It's so good of you, Robin," said Mavis. "You know Brown Boy meant such a lot to dad and me. Poor old boy, he should have been retired from the turf long ago. He should be passing his days in grassy idleness and growing fat."

"Well, let him grow fat in the Maynard stables then," said Robin, joyously, as they reached the house, and so it was agreed.

"Robin dearest, you know I love you, but you know I can't marry you until every last one of dad's debts are paid."

Robin nodded gloomily, and flung away his cigarette. He knew it was no use arguing with determination like Mavis's, and he knew also that he dare not suggest to such a proud nature as hers any compromise, such as letting him pay off the debts.

It was about a week after they had met at the sale, and Robin had come to see her in her new home. Mavis had taken a little apartment in town, and was living on the last of her slender resources until she could find work of some kind. They had gone to a tea room for lunch, and once again Robin had opened up the old subject and she had told him her answer.

There seemed no appeal against it, he thought desperately. What a mess life was! Here he was with plenty of money at his disposal, ready and eager to help her if she would only give him the right. But she was proud and in-

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dependent, and had determined to face her own troubles alone.

"Well, what have you thought of doing then?" he demanded bluntly, turning to her. "No office job you could get would pay your father's debts."

"But what has that got to do with winning a race?" he persisted.

"Oh, don't you see?" she cried. "Brown Boy's mother won the derby for father. Why couldn't Brown Boy himself win it for me?"

"Robin, dearest, you know I love you, but you know I can't marry you until every last one of dad's debts are paid."

"I know an office job wouldn't, but winning a race might." She spoke softly, and for a moment he thought that he had mistaken her words.

"Winning a race! Why, dearest, how could you win a race? What could you win it with?"

"Why did I buy Brown Boy?"

"Pure sentiment alone, I imagine," he said.

"I thought so, too, at the time, but since then I've wondered if perhaps I was following some instinct."

Then he saw her meaning, and he burst out laughing.

"Why, dear, Brown Boy couldn't win a race if the fate of the world depended upon it! His place is the meadow and the grass. It's ridiculous."

"It's my only hope, Robin," she said quietly.

"Then you mean you can't marry me until Brown Boy wins the derby, which by the way is in six months?"

"Something like that, Robin."

He squared his shoulders.

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"Then he shall win it!" laughed Robin, taking her hand in his. "He'll get the very best training that money can buy in the time, and I'll hand you the bill, and if he doesn't romp home, I'll have him made into glue!"

She had won her point, although she could see that he agreed with her only to please her. But she had spoken truly when she said that Brown Boy was her only chance. If he won she was saved. If he lost, the situation would be a thousand times worse. She would owe Robin for Brown Boy's maintenance as well as her father's other creditors.

But she shut her eyes to that fact and concentrated upon the main issue. Brown Boy must win at all costs. After all, it wasn't so impossible. Less likely horses won the great race every year. And there was nothing else she could do.

They talked of it until the time came for Robin's train, and she promised to come up to his father's house in a month's time to see Brown Boy put through his paces.

Robin's face was smiling as he kissed her good-by from the window of the train, but he hid beneath a smiling face a troubled mind. For he had not told her that a horse would also be running at Louisville bearing the colors of the Maynard stable.

A month later Brown Boy's chances seemed to have increased a little, if only a very little. He had been put back into training, and now and again in his work-outs he showed traces of his mother's form. But he had never won a big race of his own and Robin was doubtful, although he hid his doubts from Mavis.

At breakfast after the work-out they compared notes, and she told him her news. Through the memory of her father's name, she had secured a position in the office of a horse enthusiast, and this had enabled her to keep the small sum of her capital intact to save it for Brown Boy to carry to victory in the big race. Brown Boy had not yet been entered for the big race, and consequently they were hopeful of securing long odds against the horse. Robin pressed Mavis to accept a loan, so she could back her last hope to the fullest advantage, but she refused him gently.

"You're doing enough for me, dear, by training Brown Boy. Without your help in that what could I do?" And he had to be content.

The news of Brown Boy's entry for the derby was received with gusts of laughter in the racing world. Gus Endicott, Mavis's employer, looked at her curiously the morning it was announced in the papers. The horse was entered in her name, and it was a new thing for him to have a race-horse owner employed in his office.

"I see he's from the stable that's putting out Star of the Morning," he said to Mavis. It was news to her, for Robin had been afraid to mention the fact, and she had not noticed his entry in the papers. She was silent.

"That's the horse your young friend, Robin Maynard, is training and riding himself," went on Gus, unconscious of the emotions he was arousing in the girl's heart.

What could it mean?—Mavis asked herself. Why hadn't Robin told her of this? Hurriedly she went to the telephone and called him up.

He was contrite and apologetic when she accused him of keeping it from her.

"I'm sorry, Mavis," he said. "But you know dad had set his heart on the derby, and I thought I'd like to ride one of his horses to victory before he died."

To that Mavis could find no answer. If he had left it at that all might have been well, but he went on and as she caught the meaning of his words, her breath failed her and her lips closed tightly.

"For of course you know Brown Boy hasn't a chance in the world. He can

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never win, although he's a very good jumper."

"Do you mean to say that you're entering him for me on that belief?" she demanded.

"Why, dear, don't be angry, but you know I only did it to please you."

"Oh, don't say any more!" she pleaded, and there were tears in her voice. "I can see your point of view, but it seems so hard. Are all you men alike? I suppose you were looking forward to seeing poor Brown Boy lose, and then you'd step into the breach and offer again to pay my debts!"

He was silent and she went on:

"I suppose you can't help what you think, Robin, but whatever happens Brown Boy must win! If he doesn't I can never see you again. I'll drop out of sight somewhere, and work till every cent is paid off."

"Of course he'll win, darling," came over the wire, but now that Mavis knew his true feelings she could tell that there was no conviction in his voice.

As the great day drew nearer the girl's excitement grew until it reached fever heat. The race meant so much to her. She did not see Robin again after the talk over the telephone, but she followed the movements of the stable in the newspapers.

Tom Tripp, a famous little jockey, had been secured to ride Brown Boy. This had shortened the odds considerably, although betters who wanted—and there were only a few—could still obtain 20 to 1 against Brown Boy.

On the day of the race, Mavis went alone to the track, feeling very forlorn in the great crowds that thronged the course. She had calculated everything carefully, and she knew that if Brown Boy won she would have just enough to pay off her father's debts and pay Robin for the training of the horse, and then, too, the sale of the animal itself would help.

She forced herself to concentrate upon the great event and forget everything else. In the inclosure she saw Robin several times, and he seemed to be looking for her, but she avoided him, feeling that she could not talk to him now. The false position in which she found herself would have made the situation constrained, she felt. Here he was training and running her horse, himself, and all the while he was her rival, through no fault of his own.

But at last he found her in the paddock, and she was forced to meet him. His face was grave, and it was evident that he had bad news.

"Mavis," he said, "the very worst has happened."

"What is it?" she asked quickly.

"I just got word that Tom Tripp broke his arm in an automobile accident on his way to the course."

She reeled and would have fallen, but for the arm he held out.

She gave a hopeless sigh.

"It's all over then. I'm finished." She was very near to tears, and onlookers standing about the paddock looked at her curiously, for her story was common property.

"There's a way yet, dear," said Robin slowly.

She looked at him and laughed bitterly. "No, Robin, it's the end. I was a fool ever to think of winning. There's something against it. I wasn't meant to win."

"Do you still hold to what you said, dear?" Robin asked. "Will you still refuse to marry me if Brown Boy doesn't win?"

"I must, Robin," and her tone was gentle but firm.

"He'll win yet!" said Robin, drawing a deep breath. He turned abruptly away and went back to the dressing room, leaving a sorely perplexed girl to ponder over his last remark.

But she did not attach any great significance to his words, and turned away wearily. She felt tired and hopeless,

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and wished she were away from the noisy, excited crowd.

Just as she was nearing the gate, an unusual commotion attracted her attention.

"What's the matter?" she asked a man in the crowd, and he turned with a grin.

"Star of the Morning was withdrawn at the moment of going to the post, and young Maynard rides old Brown Boy. He's a sport, that boy. They say he trained the old plug for some girl he's crazy about, and now here he is giving up his chances of winning the derby to pilot that nag to tenth place." And he laughed and wondered why the girl turned suddenly away to hide her blushes.

What had Robin done? Her heart filled at the thought, and she looked longingly to where he was riding Brown Boy out of the paddock, in her colors. She knew what it meant to him to give up his chance, and she knew his feeling about Brown Boy. Oh, if she could only have told him how much she loved him at that precious moment!

She felt a touch on her arm. It was Gus Endicott.

"Pity you didn't get the closing prices, Miss Digby," he said kindly. "Your horse starts at 100 to 1. With Tripp not up, there's no confidence at all. It's throwing money away." She scarcely heard him, so intently was she staring at the horses and jockeys at the barrier.

There was a roar from the crowd in the grand stand as the horses left the post. As the horses thundered down the track, Mavis shut her eyes and prayed fervently.

When she opened them again, she could see through her field glasses that as usual the horses had bunched together at the first fence. As they came into

view again on the other side, she could see no trace of the violet-and-black shirt of Brown Boy's jockey, and her heart seemed to stop beating. But she breathed again an instant later, for the horse and rider stood out clearly.

"I'll give you 200 to 1 against your entry, dear Mavis," said a voice in her ear, and she turned to look into Roger Winter's mocking face. She hardly recognized him, so great was her excitement.

"All right," she cried, and looked

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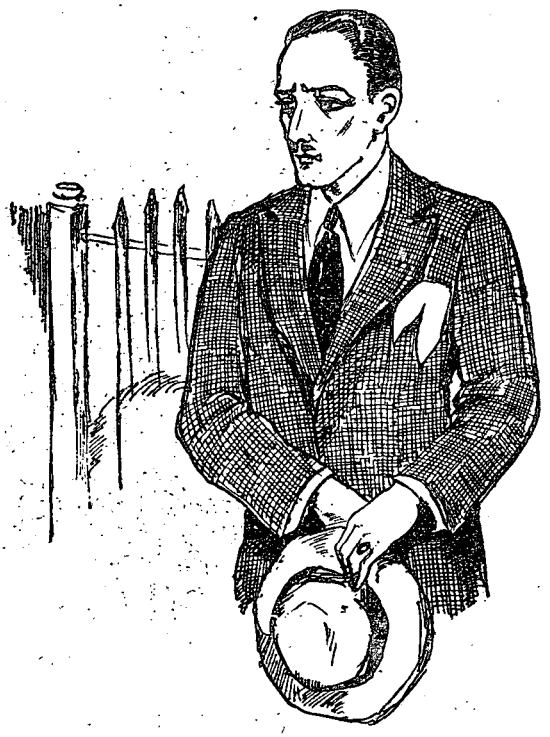
feverishly in her bag. There was just twenty-five dollars in bills and a little change. She pushed it quickly into his hand.

"It's a shame to take the money, really," he said with a grin. "Your old plug hasn't a chance against my Fifinelle. He probably won't come home until to-morrow."



There was only one thoroughly unsympathetic man near them, and that was Roger Winter. Although second in the race, he was furious at having lost.

But a vast cry from the crowd drowned out his voice as the horses took the difficult canal turn. Mavis strained her eyes through her glasses and could see that the field had dwindled by one third. Brown Boy was still up and was third in a field of ten.

"Oh, dear Robin, bring Brown Boy home for me!" Mavis pleaded silently, and then laughed hysterically to think that in another few minutes the race would be run and her future decided. Brown Boy was still holding his place. She could not look, but waited until the roar of the crowd told her that the horses had turned into the straight and were racing neck and neck to the post.

And as she looked all the blood seemed to run to her head, and a drumming came into her ears. Brown Boy was leading with Fifinelle half a length behind! The thunder of the hoofs was drowned by the thunder of the cheers as Brown Boy, putting forward its last ounce of speed, drew away another length and flashed past the post, the winner of the Kentucky Derby.

Mavis heard a cry of "Owner, owner!" and she pushed her way through the crowd. Eager hands helped her forward, and she was cheered as she reached the steaming, quivering horse and the smiling man astride it. For her story was on every one's lips, and all were glad that John Digby's girl had made good.

Her heart seemed too full as she stretched her hand up to Robin. He took it and pressed it in his own.

"Oh, Robin!" she whispered. "You've done everything for me!"

He had eyes only for her as the crowd cheered and shouted around them.

"It was Brown Boy himself that did it," he said. "He simply carried me around. And I knew he carried our happiness on his back, too. I think he knew it, too. It's a great finish to his career, and the grass of retirement will taste all the sweeter for it."

There was only one thoroughly unsympathetic man near them, and that was Roger Winter. Although second in

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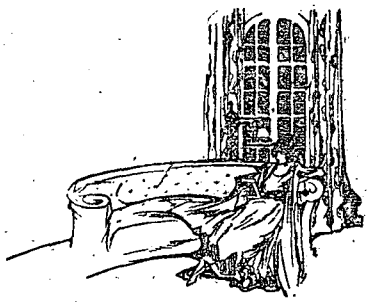
the race, he was furious at having lost, and his face was dark as Mavis walked over to him.

"I suppose I'll have your check in the morning, dear Mr. Winter," she said sweetly. "Your Fifinelle isn't a bad mare, but she isn't in the running with the pick of John Digby's stable. It's a shame to take the money really." And she and Robin burst into happy laughter as Winter turned savagely on his heel.

"Mavis darling!" Robin cried when they were seated in his car, and the next minute she was in his arms. "Dearest one, you'll marry me now, won't you? I can't wait any longer for you. We were meant for each other!"

She nodded, and then his lips met hers rapturously. For a long moment she yielded to his kiss, knowing that her whole heart was his and his alone. "I know," she whispered softly, "and now I'll always be yours, Robin. It was fate, I guess. Brown Boy won happiness for us when he won his last race."

But Brown Boy, the derby, the whole world was forgotten as she surrendered once more to the ecstasy of Robin's kiss.



LOVE'S DESIRE

HAD I one wish, and only one,
Before my span of life was done,
'Twould be to lean upon your breast,
Close to the heart that loves me best.

To feel your burning lips press mine,
While through our veins the glowing wine
Of love's sweet vintage pulsed like fire,
Borne into flame by our desire.

To have your strong arms hold me fast,
Forget the world, the lonely past;
To drink deeply of rapturous bliss
In one long, lingering, lovers' kiss.

Oh, dearest, never let me go,
Weld close the links, I love you so;
A willing captive I, and true,
Take me, make me a part of you.

H. H. FARISS.

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Choose Your Bride!

By Leta Zoe Adams

THINGS were happening in the Frolick Shop that morning—strange things that had never before taken place within the shop's exclusive portals.

"There's just this about it," Gill Colman was saying to the three young saleswomen, "I don't even know an ensemble from a negligee, so how in thunder can I run a women's import shop? I'm a grain broker, not a crêpe de Chine expert."

"But couldn't you learn, Mr. Colman?" Gladys Connell purred, lifting her violet eyes to his. Gladys was distressingly beautiful in a languid, willowy way, and as feminine as chiffon.

"And neglect my own business?" Gill Colman countered. "No, the logical course is just to close the shop."

Inez Miller, who always told people she was French because she was little, had snapping black eyes, and the kind of sleek black hair one sees on manikins, looked scornful.

"Apple sauce! If Miss Colman hadn't thought you could roll your own she wouldn't have willed her shop to you."

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"I was my Aunt Louise's only heir. She had to will me her shop, or leave it to charity," he explained. He looked at Fay Saunders, the third young saleswoman.

There was something awfully attractive about Fay. It wasn't the goddess-like beauty of Gladys, nor the vivacity of Inez. It was something which had to do with a tip-tilted nose and a mouth a little too wide and candid for a magazine-cover artist's taste. When Fay came into the picture, people were likely to have the feeling that although they might not choose her for a beauty contest, they would certainly choose her for a companion on a desert island.

Fay smiled up at him reassuringly, because in his eyes she saw a mute appeal for help. And in all her twenty-two years Fay had never failed to rally to a call for help from one in distress, and obviously Gill Colman was in distress.

She had known that from the moment he had rushed into the shop half an hour before, all distraught and bewildered over the reading of his Aunt Louise's will.

It was the first time any of the girls had seen their deceased employer's nephew. They all knew that such a person existed, for Miss Colman had often spoken of him in quite flattering terms, calling him "that dear boy" and "my brother Earl's splendid son." The girls had even talked to him over the telephone on various occasions when he called his aunt, but not until Miss Colman's will had made him their boss had he deigned to appear in the no man's land of the Frolics Shop.

It wasn't any wonder that he felt like a cat in a strange garret, Fay thought.

"It would take a month or more to close out the stock, Mr. Colman," she said briskly. "But we're all familiar with the shop's business, and I think we can manage nicely."

Inez peered at Fay, scowling. Gladys blinked. But Gill Colman's face instantly relaxed in vast relief.

"That's fine, Miss Saunders. Since you were Aunt Louise's assistant, I believe I'll just ask you to take charge here. I can drop in every day and confer with you about anything that comes up. That would work out all right, wouldn't it?"

Fay assured him that it would. "You needn't worry about us at all, Mr. Colman."

"Thanks a lot, Miss Saunders." Impulsively he gave Fay's hand a grateful wrench, a sudden smile lighting his gray eyes.

The wrench left Fay's hand tingling even after he had gone out the door. The smile left her face glowing, too, but there was no time to think about that, because Gladys had wilted in one of the customer's chairs and was dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"We'll be out of a—j-job!" Gladys sobbed brokenly. "What'll we do?"

"Do?" Fay's wide, generous mouth twitched at the corners, and her clear hazel eyes twinkled. "Why, I suppose we'll all starve to death and be buried in paupers' graves."

"Oh, Fay——" In spite of herself, Gladys smiled a little through her tears.

Inez flashed out suddenly: "If you two intend to stand aside and see some one snatch a good job right from under your noses, you're dumb-bells."

"It wouldn't be the first time I'd been a dumb-bell," Fay said.

"It isn't too late for him to change his mind," Inez went on, her black eyes darting from Gladys to Fay. "And we've got to make him do it, too!"

"This sounds interesting," Fay said. "Do you use the torture method?"

Inez's voice dropped to a confidential tone. "Listen here. Suppose Gill Colman were to fall in love with one of us. Then he'd listen with wide-open ears to anything the loved one said, and if she urged him to keep the shop run-

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ning he'd do it in a minute—just to please her! Do you see?"

Gladys evidently saw something she hadn't seen before, for she sat up straighter. "What a funny idea!" she drawled.

A shrewd glint came into Inez's eyes. "It all came to me while we were talking to him. It came to me like this: 'Here's an attractive and eligible young man, and here are three attractive and eligible girls. If one of us married him——'"

"Married him!" Fay gasped.

"The other two could run the shop. A perfectly spiffy arrangement! None of us would lose our jobs, and one of us would own a nice little business."

"As a business woman, Inez, I think you rate first prize," Fay commented.

"You think I'm being funny, but I'm not!" Inez flared. "I mean it. This is a good job, and you know it. And I, for one, don't intend to sit back and lose it without a struggle."

"Just how do you intend to struggle?" Fay inquired dryly. "Will you line us up and say to him: 'Here are three girls eligible for matrimony. Step right up and choose your bride!'"

"Don't be silly!" Inez flung back. "We can't all bombard him at once. We'd get in each other's way and it would end up in a row. So we'll have to take turns, of course. We can draw lots for first, second, and third chances. Each one will have—say two weeks. There isn't much time if we're going to save the shop—and our jobs."

"Our jobs," repeated Fay. "But what if the man's already in love with some one? I suppose we're to toss her over a cliff some dark night."

"He isn't in love with any one," Inez retorted. "Don't you remember how Miss Colman used to say he was so absorbed in his business that he didn't have time to play around with girls?" She turned to Gladys. "You'll do it, won't you, Glad?"

Gladys slowly lifted her sleepy violet eyes. "Do you think he'd really fall in love with one of us—if we wanted him to?"

"Of course he'll fall for one of us!" Inez brushed that objection aside briefly. "I'm not worrying about that. You'll do it, won't you, Fay? No one else need know a thing about it. And you'll have to admit Gill Colman isn't any washout."

Fay was willing to admit that readily enough. She saw him as she had seen him a few minutes before, floundering about in a strange sea of pert young saleswomen and imported dresses, his gray eyes troubled, his sandy hair a little rumpled like a small boy's.

Inez wasn't serious, of course. She couldn't be. No girl did such a thing as Inez proposed even for fun. No girl went gunning for a man's heart just to hold a job. There wasn't a chance in the world that Inez would really do what she planned.

"Speaking of losing our jobs," Fay said lightly, "we surely will if we don't get to work."

"You won't do it then?"

"Thanks for the invitation," Fay said, "but I'm afraid you'll have to count me out."

Abruptly she left them and went up into the little office on the balcony. There she tried to concentrate on the previous day's bookkeeping, which had always been one of her duties as Miss Colman's assistant. She had spoken gayly enough to Inez, but once away from her Fay had to admit that she didn't feel quite so blithe.

What if Inez should really do as she said?

A little later Gladys came up.

"What do you think, Fay? I drew first chance! Inez has to give me the stage for two weeks. Won't you change your mind? It would be fun, wouldn't it? You know—just to see if he'd fall for one of us!"

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"I don't even know an ensemble from a negligee, so how in thunder can I run a women's import shop?"

So they were going to do it, after all!

"I'll have my fun watching you two," Fay said. But to herself she added: "Poor Gill Colman!"

"I'll have to figure out a way to get him to myself for a while," Gladys was going on blandly.

"Have you any ideas?"

Gladys's lids drooped dreamily over her eyes. "Yes, I have an idea," she said.

Gill Colman turned up at the shop at closing time the following evening. When he came in Inez and Gladys were replacing dresses on the racks in the rear of the shop, and Fay was in the office on the balcony. In a few swift leaps he was with Fay.

"How's everything?"

She looked up, smiling. After all, whatever Inez and Gladys decided to do had nothing to do with her. In the past twenty-four hours she had mentally washed her hands of the whole silly affair.

"Everything's fine!" she told Gill Colman. "I'm advertising a big closing-out sale to start next week. Do you want to take care of the money? I've been taking it to the bank every noon, but if you'd prefer to handle it yourself——"

"Meaning I don't trust you?" He

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grinned attractively. "I'd trust you with my grandmother's silver service."

Fay laughed. "Have I such an honest face?"

"I know this much: crooks don't have eyes like yours."

Fay dropped the indicated eyes.

He went on: "I'm beginning to have a lot of respect for Aunt Louise's judgment."

Fay, acutely conscious of the heightened color in her cheeks, picked up a sheet of paper lying on the desk before her. "Here's the record of yesterday's sales."

His eyes twinkled across at her as he took the proffered paper. "Oh, yes, as we were saying——"

"Fay—Mr. Colman—come quick!"

They both sprang to the balcony railing to see Inez looking up at them, fright in her face.

"It's Glad! Come down quick!" she urged in a shrill voice.

In a moment they were both leaning over Gladys, who was slumped in a chair.

"I—don't know—what—came over me," she murmured. "I feel—so dizzy."

Gill Colman turned to Inez. "Do you know where to get some water?"

"Oh, no! Don't—don't bother." Gladys got to her feet, and then all at once she clutched at Gill Colman's sleeve and reeled back against him.

"I'm fainting."

He caught her in his arms.

She looked more beautiful than ever lying there in his arms, her bright hair falling back against his dark suit, her lovely lips parted.

For a moment Fay thought Gladys really had fainted; then she realized that it was all a sham, and felt a little faint herself.

Under the stimulation of a glass of water Gladys presently came to, but still drooped in the chair, moaning and trying to look pale and helpless.

Inez said authoritatively: "I think you'd better pack her in a taxi and take her home, Mr. Colman. Evidently she's not going to be able to go by herself for some time, and if she should faint again it would take a man to carry her."

There was nothing else for Gill Colman to do, of course.

Fay saw them off in the taxi, Gladys leaning her head against Gill Colman's shoulder, for all the world like his sweetheart.

The next morning Gladys did not appear at the shop. Her sister, with whom she lived, called Fay and told her that Gladys had a nervous breakdown and probably wouldn't be in the shop for some days.

Turning from the phone Fay made a little face and said quite distinctly: "Apple sauce!"

She hadn't expected to see Gill Colman until closing time, but as she was getting ready to go to lunch he appeared.

"I'm just in time, I see!" His eyes took in her slenderness and the close little hat which really came from a summer-end sale, but which looked like Paris on Fay. She had a special way with hats.

"I was just going to lunch, but if you want to see me I can let Inez go now instead."

"Whatever business I have can be thrashed out over a chicken pie," he said, "if you'll let me buy you one."

"I talk business best over a vegetable salad." Fay's eyes glowed up at him mischievously.

They found a table in a busy tea room, and though they lingered an hour or more, he never so much as mentioned business. He did mention that he was going to buy Gladys some flowers, and asked Fay's advice about what might be suitable, but that could hardly have been called business.

Fay was late getting back to the shop, of course. As she came in Inez, who

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was busy with a customer, sent her a razor-edged glance and the brief remark:

"Were you on a vacation?"

"If I answer," said Fay to herself, "I'll say something catty."

So she kept quiet.

It seemed quite natural for Gill Colman to appear casually at the shop the next noon and bear Fay off to lunch again. He said something about talking business, but it didn't sound very convincing, and as on the day before, he appparently forgot all about it over the luncheon table. And Fay asked herself when she left him that noon: "Will this be a regular thing?"

Not that it mattered in the least, Fay was quick to assure herself. If he wanted to be nice to her she couldn't be rude. She felt her heart swell with what she interpreted as pity for Gill Colman. Poor man! What with the shop difficulties, and Gladys sick in bed, and Inez waiting like the clutching hand, his life was a pretty miserable affair.

The lunches did become a regular thing. Sometimes Gill and Fay really talked business, although most of their conversation gave the shop's affairs a wide berth. They discovered a great many important things about each other. For instance, they both liked poetry, Irish terriers, and desert sunsets, and they didn't like caviar and parrots.

At the end of two weeks Gladys came back. So Gill hadn't chosen her!

"I guess my method was too old-fashioned," she explained to Inez and Fay. "Oh, he was nice enough to me. He came out to see me and brought me flowers and candy, but that was all."

Inez tossed her head. "I didn't think you were going at it right. I know his type. You've got to set off a bomb under him to wake him up."

Fay's brows contracted with annoyance as she looked at Inez. Now that it was her turn, what did Inez intend to do with Gill Colman, anyway? Hadn't he been bothered enough with Gladys's Victorian antics?

"I thought maybe when Gladys came back you'd both have enough of this get-your-man business," she said, trying to sound offhand and not succeeding too well. "After all, a joke's a joke."

Inez brought out a nervous little laugh. "I know what you've got on your mind, Fay. You think that because he's been taking you to lunch you'd have a chance with him yourself if nobody bothered you!"

"Why, Inez——"

"Of course you'd deny it! All I can say is that you're going to have some real competition from now on. All's fair in love, and since you refused to come into this pact with Gladys and me, you don't rate any consideration from us that I can see."

"So this is a formal declaration of war?" Fay's eyes burned with anger, but she was determined that Inez shouldn't know her real feelings.

"Call it what you want to!" Inez flung back spitefully.

Fay withdrew to her balcony sanctum. Presently Gladys came up.

"I'm sorry I ever did it," she confessed, sinking into a chair near Fay. "I've felt mean ever since. He's so awfully nice and—everything. What Inez said got under my skin, and I just hope you take him away from her, Fay."

"Me?" Fay cried. "I'm not in this, Glad."

"I know, but he likes you. Hasn't he been taking you to lunch every day?"

"Business," Fay said tersely. "I'm in charge here. He couldn't do less—very well."

"Maybe not," said Gladys. "Still you can't tell."

Fay caught her up indignantly. "He's never so much as mentioned any

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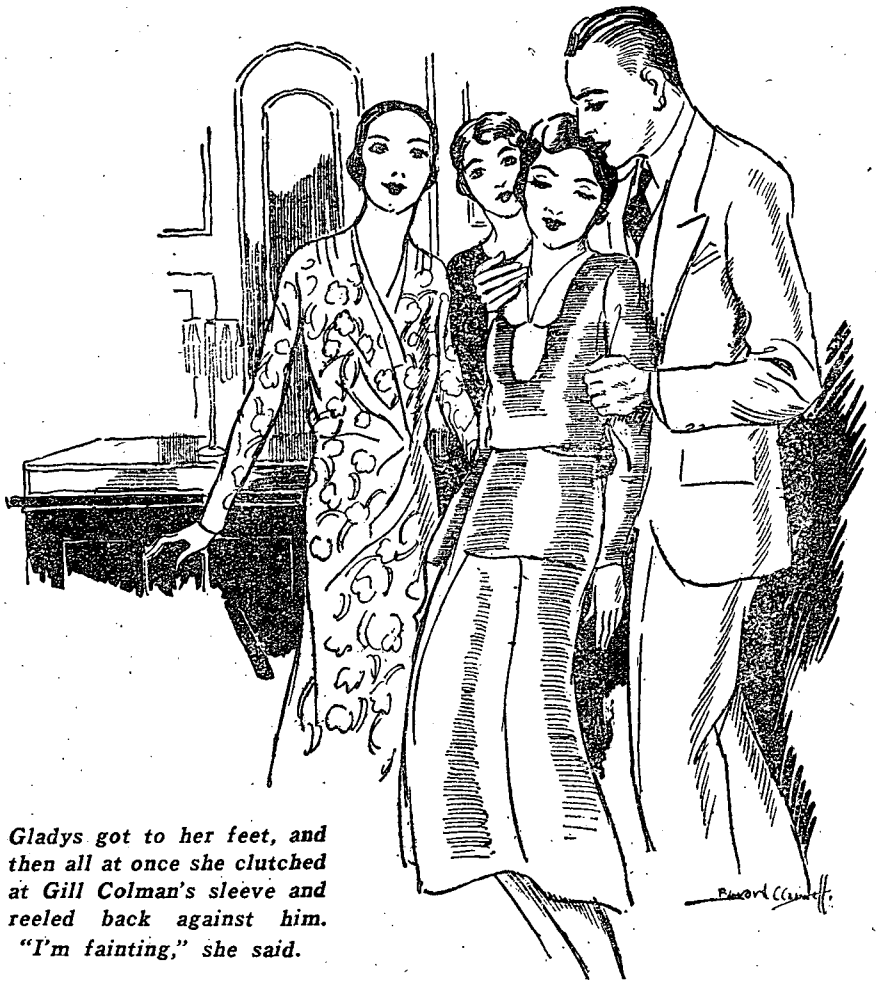

Gladys got to her feet, and then all at once she clutched at Gill Colman's sleeve and reeled back against him. "I'm fainting," she said.

personal feeling toward me. It's silly to think he might like me—that way. Please don't, Glad. You make me feel like a—conspirator, too."

"Why, Fay, I do believe you're blushing!"

"No, it's just too warm in here." Fay halted the difficult conversation by crossing to a window and opening it. She took several long breaths of the fresh air before returning to her desk.

When Gill came in that afternoon Fay saw Inez intercept him. For a while Inez talked to him in confidential tones; then her voice rose somewhat so that Fay could hear it on the balcony.

"You've been shutting yourself up in your old office too long, and if you don't watch out you're going to be one of these long-faced killjoys who's forgotten how to enjoy himself. I've decided that you need some lively parties. That's why I've gone ahead and planned one for to-night—up at my apartment. A lot of keen people will be there."

So that was to be Inez's line! She was going to bully him into going with her!

Fay felt a wave of indignation sweep over her, but she shrugged it away resolutely. After all, he was old enough to take care of himself, wasn't he?

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The next day Fay heard all about the party from the report Inez had repeated to Gladys. He'd been quite a favorite, and Inez's crowd, under her tutelage, had rallied around him and dated him up for several other affairs.

He took Fay to lunch as usual, but he made no mention of the party.

In the days that followed, Fay heard reports about all the parties through Gladys. Once, it seemed, Gill had said he couldn't be present, and later the crowd had called at his home and had found him lounging about in a bath robe, apparently doing nothing more important than reading a book. They had stayed and made him be host.

The day before Inez's two weeks trial were up Gladys came to Fay, looking decidedly worried.

"It looks as though Inez is going to be Mrs. Gill Colman, all right, Fay."

"You mean—he's going to—marry her?"

Gladys nodded. "She plans to marry him to-night, or I should say, early in the morning as soon as the Municipal Building opens."

"He asked her to marry him? He fell in love with her, after all?"

"I wouldn't say that," Gladys went on. "That's where the difficulty comes in. He hasn't asked her to marry him nor even made love to her—so she's just going to dare him into it."

"Oh—no!"

"She can do it," Gladys continued. "There's to be another party to-night—her birthday party, she says—and she's fixed it with the crowd to suggest that some couple be married. Then they'll pick out Gill and Inez and have them up at the Municipal Building before he knows what it's all about. It's been done, you know, and I wouldn't be afraid to bet she'll really have him saying: 'I do.'"

All day Fay talked to customers, but her mind was far from the matter of selling dresses. What did it matter if Mrs. van Vliet couldn't wear purple, or that Miss Troy couldn't find a thing in the house which was suitable for her bridge tea? The only thing that mattered was that Gill Colman was in a tight corner, and if somebody didn't help him he'd be lost.

Fay all but dropped the silver-metal cloth imported gown which she had just fitted on Mrs. Henry Flohr as the idea came to her. Why not? At least she could try!

Gill did not come into the shop that afternoon until after four o'clock. Fay took pains to be alone on the balcony. She saw Inez meet him at the door.

"Remember—my place at ten o'clock. I'll be looking for you!"

"But, Inez——" He was trying to get out of it! He didn't want to go!

"Oh, don't give excuses. You know you want to be there!"

When he came up to the balcony his brows were drawn together in a frown of concentration, or was it irritation?

Fay was very businesslike. She pretended that she had just noticed his arrival at the shop.

"I was beginning to be afraid you weren't coming to-day," she said.

"I suppose you're going to tell me you're going to sue another high and mighty customer and want my opinion—is that it?" he questioned, seating himself near her and placing his hat on her desk.

Fay smiled across at him disarmingly. "Nothing like that to-day. Something quite different."

She took a long breath. "It's like this. You see, yesterday one of our best customers, Mrs. Dwight Meade, came in and bought two gowns. She said she wanted them to-day and would send her chauffeur for them. But this morning she called up long distance—she lives out in Tuxedo somewhere—and said the chauffeur was ill and couldn't call for them. There was no one else to send, and she's going away

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to-morrow and wants the dresses. I couldn't get away to catch a bus, that would let me get there and back before midnight, so I was wondering if you could drive me out there to deliver the dresses. I know it's quite a distance, but I don't know what else to do about it. I've been trying to think of some other way, but I don't seem able to."

Gill considered a moment, then looked at his watch. "If we hurried—I have an engagement later in the evening—yes, I believe we could just about make it."

"Then bring your car around while I close up shop," Fay instructed him hurriedly.

As soon as he had gone she whisked Gladys and Inez out of the shop. Then she fixed up a fictitious order in one of the shop's suit boxes, and just before leaving she slipped a long black pin into her bag.

Darkness had already fallen when they finally swept out to the highway in the general direction of Tuxedo. The air was crisp and cold, and a new moon, as yellow as a gourd, hung above the winter trees. Fay, wrapped in a warm beaver coat, snuggled close to Gill's broad shoulder and sighed quite contentedly.

They stopped at a wayside inn for dinner, and Fay purposely dallied over hers. Every minute counted.

When they took up the trail again, Fay gave the directions. A few miles from Tuxedo she directed Gill to leave the highway and follow one of the many roads which wound picturesquely among the woods. From that road she directed him to turn into another. By the fourth turning she admitted laughingly that she wasn't sure they had taken the right road.

"I thought Mrs. Meade said to take the second road from the gas station, but I may have misunderstood over the phone."

Gill stopped the car to get his bearings. And after looking over the scribbled directions Fay had made for herself, they both admitted that they were completely lost!

"We'll have to find some one to direct us," Gill said, and started the car.

After another half hour of weaving about the wandering roads they sighted a lighted farmhouse.

As soon as Gill had gone up to the door to make his inquiries Fay slipped out of the car, and taking the long black pin from her bag, jabbed it into first a rear tire, then a front one.

Gill returned to say that the farmer had never heard of any Meades in the vicinity.

It was half a mile farther along that Gill began to notice the unnatural lurch of the car. When he stopped under a big pine on a lonely stretch and looked at the two deflated tires, he said:

"What in thunder? I thought I had good tires!"

He had only one spare.

"And I suppose the nearest garage is twenty miles away!" Fay said, pretending to be very concerned. "But maybe that farmer back there has a vulcanizing outfit."

They decided to walk back together and find out. They had to get the farmer out of bed. He was cross, and only by the offer of a generous fee did he allow Gill to use his vulcanizing outfit.

When they again reached the car it was well after midnight, and the new moon had wandered down to the western horizon.

The matter of putting the vulcanized inner tubes back into the tires was a short one, but the pumping with Gill's small pump was an endless job. He pumped until the perspiration stood out in beads on his face. He pumped until his hands were calloused.

It was so lovely there in the night with only the friendly stars and whis-

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pering trees for company. If only—after a while—he'd tell her he loved her!

Fay caught her breath in sharp horror. What was she thinking, anyway? She'd brought him out here to save him from a humiliating position, not to make love to her!

She began to sing a cheerful little song, keeping time with the pump. If she sang perhaps she could shut the door on that forbidden room she had glimpsed just now.

When he pronounced the car ready to travel once more, it was almost two c'clock.

"I'm afraid we're hopelessly lost," Fay said as he climbed back behind the wheel. "And even if we found Mrs. Meade's place now she wouldn't be up. I think we might as well go on back home."

It was almost dawn when they reached Fay's home and Gill let her out.

Fay stood at her door watching until the car's tail light had disappeared far down the street, then she fixed her eyes on the morning star.

"I'm despicable," she told the twinkling heavenly body. "I'm much, much worse than Inez."

It was a rather sullen-looking Inez who made her appearance at the shop the next morning. Gill was so late in coming that Fay went off to lunch alone. When she returned, Inez had gone to lunch and no one was there except Gladys.

"So you spoiled Inez's little plan," Gladys drawled as soon as Fay came in the door.

"Was Gill here? Did he tell her about last night?" Fay asked quickly. She could feel the blood drain from her face, from her hands, too, leaving them icy.

"Yes, he told her. Didn't your ears burn?"

"She was angry?"

"'Angry' is a mild word. She was rigid," Gladys explained, smiling a little at the memory of something.

"What did she do?" Fay asked: "For Heaven's sake, tell me quickly!"

"What would you expect her to do when she found herself in such a tight place?" Gladys shrugged. "She turned the tables on you."

"What do you mean?"

"She told Gill that you were jealous of his going to her parties, that you'd found out about the one last night and to keep him away from it had rigged up this phony trip to Tuxedo."

"She—said that?"

"Did she!" Fay had never seen Gladys so animated about anything before. "She told him more than that. She told him that you had made a bet with us that you could marry him before the month was out. In other words, she pretended it was you and not she who was after him. She even made herself out as the heroine, and told him she had been inviting him to these parties because she felt sorry for him and didn't want to see him taken in so completely by you! Oh, she told him plenty!"

"And he—what did he say?" Fay breathed.

"He just looked at her, and said: 'Oh, yes?' and: 'You don't say!' and: 'It's kind of you to tell me.' Then he walked out."

"Oh, how he must hate me!" Fay cried.

"She certainly made you look like a double-dyed villain, but I'm so glad you did it, Fay. Imagine outwitting her like that!"

Fay went up on the balcony, but not to work. At her desk she sat a long time staring straight into space. She heard Inez return and heard customers come and go. She knew she ought to be helping the girls, but she couldn't make herself go down.

About four o'clock she took her hat

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and coat and bag and beckoned to Gladys.

"I'm quitting here, Glad. I've left my resignation on my desk. You don't need to tell Gill Colman anything."

Then while Gladys was recovering from her amazement, she was out on the street and on her way home.

She didn't eat much dinner, and when her mother wanted to know the reason she said she had a headache.

After dinner she went into the living room and sat down in front of the fireplace to stare moodily into the flames. If he despised her as much as she despised herself—she shuddered and drew closer to the fire, although she wasn't at all cold.

Presently she heard the doorbell ring and her mother answer it. Then she heard a man's voice—a familiar voice.

She sprang up in panic, but not in time to escape, for he was already in the room. Gill Colman stood before her.

"I found your note." He paused, his eyes fixed anxiously upon her. "You gave no reason for leaving."

They had to get the farmer out of bed. He was cross, and only by the offer of a generous fee did he allow Gill to use his vulcanizing outfit.

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"And you've come to find out my reason?" Fay hardly recognized her own voice, it was so small and humiliated.

"Not exactly. I——"

"Then you've come on a vain errand," Fay broke in. She started to move across the room.

"Don't go. Fay—please listen!" he pleaded.

At the sound of her given name Fay halted uncertainly. Seeing he had her attention again, he rushed on:

"I came because I wanted to talk to you about something else, something that——"

"I don't see what you could have to say—to me," Fay managed to say chokingly.

"Don't you?" He came to her and snatched up both her hands to press between his own. "Fay, don't you really know? Haven't you seen? I love you, Fay; that's what I came to say. I intended to wait until the shop was closed out, but when I got your note I was afraid I'd lose you if I didn't come right away—to-night."

"But I thought—didn't Inez tell you?"

"You don't think I believed her story, do you? It was too pat, too vengeful. I was puzzled, naturally, but when I went back to the shop this evening to see you Gladys put me right. She told me about their hatched-up scheme, all about this choosing a bride business. Choosing a bride!" He laughed aloud. "As though I could choose any bride but you!"

"She told you why I took you to Tuxedo last night?"

"She said you'd done it to save me from some marrying plan of Inez's!"

"And you—believed that?" Fay's voice was hardly more than a whisper.

"I believed it, yes—but I hoped it was for another reason, too. I hoped—oh, Fay, I hoped you'd done it because you didn't want me to marry any one else! I hoped you weren't just feeling sorry for me. I hoped that Inez was right—just a little—that you really were jealous."

Fay lowered her eyes so that he could see only the sweeping lashes. "Inez was right—just a little," she murmured. "I thought I was just being big-hearted, but last night I knew there'd been another reason, and when Inez told you about me I had such a guilty conscience I couldn't face you again. It was so awfully small!" Her lashes swept up again so that he had the full power of her eyes' clear beauty. "You don't know how I hated to quit right at the end when you needed me so."

But Gill had already heard enough. In a single movement he had gathered Fay into his arms.

"Then you do love me, little Fay!" He kissed her hair. "You'll not leave me any more, will you?" He kissed her eyes. "You'll be my bride—my wife?" He kissed her tip-tilted nose.

"Yes," breathed Fay happily. "As long as you need me I'll be yours, Gill."

And then he kissed her lips, and Fay knew that he would always need her, and that she must always love him.

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Exiled!

By Eric Powers

THE dull, heavy gray of the sky was shot every other moment with forks of flame, while the splitting roar of the thunder seemed as though thousands of guns were leveled at the earth, and destruction was imminent.

Across the desolate stretch of country a girl fled, drawing her breath in gasping sounds as each new flash and explosion seemed to threaten to blind and deafen her.

Never before in all her life could Corinne Denton remember such a storm, and to be out in the open with no sign of shelter was terrifying.

It was growing darker, too, the late winter night lending its blackness to that of the storm, and it was becoming increasingly difficult to see her way.

Corinne was obliged to slacken her steps, but she dared not stop, because she felt that if she did she would fall down where she stood.

Suddenly the sky seemed to open again—to be split in half by a vivid, ghastly flash. At the same instant, the terrible cracking sound which comes when something has been struck, tore across the ominous silence.

A scream broke from her lips, and Corinne stumbled and almost fell. But the flash had shown her something, and she knew that a couple of yards to her left was a high brick wall, and a wall would mean a building of some description, she thought.

She felt her way warily toward it and after what seemed an age, her hands came in contact with something solid and cold.

Corinne began to grope her way

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along it, and presently another flash of lightning showed her a pair of iron gates a little farther on.

Reaching them, she pushed against them with all her remaining strength. To her relief they yielded and she found herself walking up what was evidently a drive. Then she caught sight of a light shining through the windows of a house, and she had almost reached it when the storm, which had lulled, came back with redoubled violence.

A flight of steps led upward to a heavy front door. Corinne stumbled up them and her hands came in contact with an iron bell pull. She dragged at it wildly and heard a bell pealing and echoing through the house.

It was drowned in a crash of thunder, and after what seemed an interminable time the great doors swung back, showing the lighted warmth of a spacious hall beyond, where a log fire burned in an open fireplace.

A manservant stood in the entrance, a frown on his swarthy face.

"Oh, please," said Corinne, breathless with fatigue. "I got lost and was caught in the storm. If you would give me shelter until it is over, I should be so grateful!"

She did not know quite what answer she expected—but the man's frowning expression never changed, and to her horror he made as though to shut the door.

"I am sorry," he said with a strong foreign accent. "It is impossible."

"But you can't mean that you won't let me in," she cried. "Please—oh, please, don't shut the door!" and using all the frail strength that was left to her, she pushed against it.

"Be careful," the man warned. "I shall hurt you. I tell you it is impossible to let you in."

"What is the trouble, Pedro?" a voice questioned imperatively, as a tall man in evening dress came down the stairs.

"A young woman, señor, who——"

"I only ask for shelter until the storm is over!" Corinne interrupted. "What harm can I possibly do?"

The newcomer paused, and for a moment Corinne thought that he also was going to refuse. Then, as the servant moved a little aside, the light streamed out full onto her pleading face, and there was a sharp exclamation from the master, echoed by the man Pedro, who shrank back, crossing himself.

The next moment, Corinne felt a hand close on her arm, she was drawn inside and the door was shut. The servant had fled and Corinne found herself facing the master of the house.

A pair of brilliant dark eyes met hers, amazement and searching inquiry in their depths.

"In Heaven's name, who are you?" he demanded hoarsely.

"My name is Corinne Denton," she told him.

He bowed.

"I am José Fernandez—forgive my man's seeming discourtesy, but I live almost as a recluse. My poor house is yours to command, señorita. But you are wet through. If you will avail yourself of them, you will find a change of clothes upstairs. There are a lot of things left here by—my niece. And I think"—his eyes ran over her with a peculiar glance—"that I can guarantee they will fit you."

"You are very kind," Corinne murmured, but in spite of his kindness, there was a vague feeling deep down in her heart that she did not like.

She was sure that he had been quite as ready as his servant to shut her out into the night and the storm. What was it that had made him change his mind?

She watched him curiously as he moved to the back of the hall, and opening a door called down a passage which evidently led to the servants' quarters.

In answer to his second call a woman

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appeared. She hung back until he spoke to her sharply, and then, as he gave her some orders in rapid Spanish, she nodded and came forward sullenly.

"If you will follow Carlotta, she will look after you," the man told Corinne. "I shall be dining in three quarters of an hour and shall be honored if you will join me."

Corinne followed the maid up the stairs, across a landing at the top, and along a corridor, where she opened a door and touching an electric switch, stood back for Corinne to enter.

To her discomfort, Corinne noticed that the woman pressed herself back against the wall as though to avoid touching her, and there were both fear and dislike in her dark eyes.

The room was exquisitely decorated, the walls papered in the palest mauve, and hangings and upholstery of egg-shell blue silk patterned with tiny crushed posies of mauve and pink roses. The carpet was black, the furniture of gray satinwood, ornamented by bunches of flowers and leaves, reproducing the general color scheme of the room.

There was a white bearskin rug in front of the fireplace, and Carlotta bent down to turn on the electric radiator which stood there, for the room seemed strangely cold. Outside the storm had abated, but the rain was still coming down in a deluge, and a wind was rising.

"What a terrible storm!" Corinne said rather timidly looking at the sulky face of her companion.

Carlotta merely shook her head. She either did not understand English or would not speak. She crossed the floor and opening an inner door, switched on a light and disclosed a bathroom with mauve marble walls and a bath of the same with shining silver fittings. She turned on the taps and indicating the bath, came back into the room.

Corinne thanked her and went into the bathroom, shutting the door behind her.

While she undressed she could hear the maid moving about in the bedroom, but by the time she had discarded the last of her wet clothes and plunged into the hot bath, perfumed by a handful of bath salts from the large crystal jar on the shelf near, the movements had ceased.

Relaxed in the soft and perfumed water, Corinne seemed able to throw off the last of the nightmare which had engulfed her. Her mind began to clear of its maze of unhappiness and terror, and she started to speculate about this extraordinary house set in the lonely hills and appearing to contain all the luxuries of a first-class hotel.

Who was José Fernandez? He must be enormously rich, and the girl he had spoken of as his niece was certainly to be envied. She was evidently away, but it seemed strange that she should have left her belongings as though she expected to use them, for Corinne had noticed the dressing table with its bottles of perfume and jars of cosmetics and face creams. There was a bath robe hanging up behind the door, too, and in the bedroom she had noticed several dainty garments flung carelessly about.

She began to wonder then at the disturbance her own appearance had caused. Why had the man Pedro turned pale with fear when he caught sight of her? And Carlotta was frightened of her—Corinne was certain of that.

She gave a little laugh. She supposed they were just a couple of superstitious people upset by the storm and believing probably that she was some child of the darkness and the fury of the elements.

Her bath over, she wrapped herself in the robe hanging behind the door and went back into the bedroom. There was no sign of Carlotta, but exquisite underwear of pink silk, trimmed with real lace, and a dinner gown of black taffeta over a silver slip, lay ready on

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the bed, together with pearl-colored silk stockings and high-heeled silver slippers.

It was all very strange, but after what she had been through, the quiet luxury of the house seemed to wrap her around like a benediction, and Corinne made up her mind not to worry but to accept anything that came along—to pretend that she actually had a right to be here and wear these lovely clothes.

If there was one crumpled roseleaf it was the thought of her host. There was something sinister about him which vaguely disturbed her.

When she was ready she could not repress a little gasp of pleasure as she surveyed herself in the long glass.

For the first time in her life Corinne realized that she was beautiful. The black gown threw into relief the glorious whiteness of her skin, and the burnished red-gold of her naturally wavy hair.

Opening her bedroom door she glanced out into the corridor. There was no one about and for the first time the intense silence of the house struck her as having something strange about it. But she shook off the feeling resolutely and found her way slowly downstairs.

Pedro was crossing the hall as she came down, and paused, looking up at her, the very picture of fear. Then, pointing to a door on the right, he hurried away before her feet left the last step.

She crossed to the door and tapped upon it. Her host's voice called to her to come in, and opening the door, she entered a big library.

The Spaniard was standing on the hearthrug, his back to the fire. As she entered she saw him start, and was sure that it could not be her imagination which made her think that he turned a shade paler.

He stared at her for a long moment without saying a word, and then:

"Come and sit down, Miss Denton," he invited. "Truly I think that you have been sent to me by whatever providence rules my destiny."

But Corinne had no time to take the chair her host indicated. At the moment the dinner gong sounded, and a door at the far end of the library slid back, disclosing the dining room beyond.

Corinne never forgot that meal. Faultlessly chosen and exquisitely cooked and served, every course advertised José Fernandez to be a connoisseur in food, while, inexperienced as she was, Corinne guessed that the wines which accompanied them were perfect.

Her host was a most fascinating companion. In spite of having described himself as a recluse, he seemed to have traveled all over the world and done most of the things that were worth doing, and he could talk in a very interesting way.

By the time they had returned to the library Corinne had forgotten any shadow of prejudice which she might have felt against him at the beginning, and when—having lit his own cigar and a cigarette for her—he brought her coffee cup and set it on the small table at her elbow, she said impulsively:

"I wonder if you could realize how wonderful all this is to me! I seem to have been transplanted straight into fairyland."

He looked down at her in silence for a moment, that strange expression in his narrow eyes.

"Tell me who you are," he said abruptly. "I suppose you are flesh and blood, and not a ghost driven in by the storm?"

She did not know why his words should affect her strangely, but a little shiver went down her spine. She forced a light laugh to her lips.

"No, I am real enough—although your servants seem to think that I am something to be afraid of. My name is Corinne Denton, and only yesterday

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"Come closer," said her companion softly; "there is nothing to fear."

I arrived from New York to start work as a governess at a house called Mill Grange."

"Mill Grange!" he repeated. "That must be at least four miles from here."

"Heaven knows how far it is," she answered.

Watching her closely, Fernandez saw the look of fear and distaste in her eyes.

"And what were you doing out alone with a storm coming up?" he asked. "Had I not better send word that you are safe?"

"No, please! You don't understand." The unhappy color flooded her cheeks and suddenly she covered her face with her hands. "Oh! If only I had never gone there!"

"Supposing you tell me what is wrong?" he suggested casually.

Corinne hesitated, and then after a moment her story came faltering out. She told him how she had been engaged to look after a little girl and help her with her first lessons. When she arrived she found that Mrs. Frampton, who had engaged her, was the stepmother of the child she was to look after. She disliked her employer instinctively, but not as much as the husband when she met him. The maid who served her meals had confided to her that the Framptons were very unhappy. The wife was madly

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jealous of her husband—and he gave her good cause to be. They couldn't keep a young maid, and the last governess had left because of him.

Hearing this, Corinne determined to keep Mr. Frampton at his distance. That afternoon Mrs. Frampton had driven into Milltown, the nearest village, but her husband arrived home before she had and had gone into the nursery.

He had sent the child downstairs to get something, and immediately started making love to Corinne. Furious, she had told him what she thought of him, and for answer he had seized her in his arms and was trying to kiss her when the door opened suddenly and his wife came in.

Corinne appealed to the other for protection, but instead of blaming her husband, Mrs. Frampton turned her jealous wrath upon the girl. She called her every name possible, and then ordered her out of the house.

Thankful to get away Corinne left the place, deciding that she would walk to the station. The storm was coming up, and striving to follow the directions the maid had given her, she hurried on her way, only to find as the storm broke that she was lost.

José Fernandez listened in silence until she had finished.

"It was certainly Fate that brought you to my door," he said. "Tell me, are you alone in the world?"

"Quite," she answered, "and I do not know what I shall do now. That woman will lie about me to the employment agency, and I shall find it impossible to get another job."

"I shouldn't worry about that if I were you," he told her quietly. "Tell me, do you speak any foreign languages?"

She nodded.

"French and a little Spanish—I was educated in a convent."

A curious look crept into his face.

"Yes," he said, "you were certainly sent to me by Fate. Miss Denton, how would you like to earn five thousand dollars?"

She gazed at him incredulously.

"Five thousand dollars!" she finally gasped.

He nodded.

"Why not? You would have to run a certain amount of risk—although a very small one. It happens that I want some one to go to Cordova, in Spain, on a mission, the success of which is a matter of life and death. But I can explain better if you will first come with me."

Corinne rose. There was something about his manner which fired a strange excitement in her. She had grown so tired of her dull and lonely existence and she had always longed for adventure, for a chance to do something out of the ordinary.

"Come!"

Her host walked to the door and opened it for her. Then he led the way upstairs.

At the top of the first flight he turned off in the opposite direction to that in which her room lay, and she followed him up some more stairs. As they mounted it seemed as though the uncanny silence which she had noticed before deepened about them.

He opened another door and entered, turning on the light.

Corinne followed, and then paused, suddenly still, for the room they had entered was a private chapel, and in the middle of the center aisle stood a low divan, with tall white candles burning in silver sticks at the head and foot of it. On the divan, shrouded by a black satin pall, in the center of which lay a sheaf of white lilies, she could see the slender outline of a form.

Her eyes dilated and her heart missed a beat. Now she knew the meaning of the strange silence which hung over this house. It was the silence of death.

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"Come closer," said her companion softly; "there is nothing to fear."

Fascinated and against her will, Corinne moved forward and stood beside the bier as he stretched out a hand and turned back the covering.

Then she recoiled with a cry. For the face of the dead girl lying there so peacefully was the exact replica of her own!

Corinne leaned back in a corner of the train which was bearing her rapidly toward Madrid. In less than an hour she would arrive at her destination.

She glanced out at the flying scenery, and then back at the leather dressing case with its gold initials "V. C."

Had she been mad to come? And yet why should she not have done so when José Fernandez had sworn to her that she would be harming no one by doing as he wished?

After that dramatic scene in the chapel he had explained to her that the dead girl whom she so closely resembled was Vilma Carreros, his cousin, whom he hoped to have married some day.

He himself was an exile from Spain, but Vilma was free to go backward and forward. He told Corinne that it was impossible for various reasons to explain everything to her, but recently Vilma's brother, who was a member of a political secret society, had been arrested.

There were in existence certain papers which would prove his innocence, but unless they could be produced he would be shot as a spy. These papers were in Madrid. They had been promised to Vilma by the man who possessed them if she would come for them personally, but on no account would they be given to any one else.

She had arranged to go to Spain, and had come to her cousin before sailing. She had always had a weak heart and had recently been ill. She had had an attack suddenly, and before any remedies could be administered she had died.

Her death practically sealed the fate of the man who was in prison—no one would be able to get those papers now. Fernandez was in despair. And then, by an extraordinary whim of Fate, Corinne had been driven to seek shelter at his house.

Both Pedro and Carlotta believed that she was the wraith of the dead girl, and Fernandez himself had hardly been able to believe his eyes. But he had realized that this was a providential chance, and if he could persuade Corinne to take the dead girl's place and collect those papers, the situation would be saved.

So Corinne had allowed herself to be persuaded. There was one other thing to which it was necessary for her to consent, and that was to allow a small red cross to be tattooed on her left arm. There was such a sign on the dead girl's arm, and it would be necessary to show it in order to prove her identity.

She put up her hand to the spot now. It still smarted a little—and somehow that cross made her feel slightly uneasy.

Why had Vilma Carreros worn it? But Fernandez had sworn to her that the fact of her having it upon her arm would never bring any harm upon her, and she had taken his word. After all, five thousand dollars would surely compensate one for a tiny mark like that!

She was already planning what she would do when she received the money. It would buy her, for a time at any rate, the thing she had longed for most in the world—leisure. And meantime, she was face to face with an adventure the thought of which thrilled her, and by undertaking it she would save an innocent man from punishment. No, she decided, she had not one regret.

And yet, now that she was away from the fascination of José Fernandez's personality, she felt once again a vague mistrust of him stirring in her heart.

Why did he live in such isolation? What was the real reason for his not

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being able to go to Spain? But after all, she told herself, perhaps it was just as well that she could not answer those questions. What she had to do was the work she had undertaken.

But it was with a feeling of disquietude that Corinne remembered if anything should go wrong she had vowed solemnly that she would never mention his name to a living soul. If there was as little risk as he assured her, why had it been necessary for her to make that vow?

When she arrived at the hotel where she was to stay while she was in Madrid, Corinne was shown straight to the suite of rooms which had been reserved for Vilma Carreros. She was not to collect the papers from an address he had given her until she received a note to that effect from a mysterious source, and quite suddenly she began to feel restless and ill at ease, and to wish that they were securely in her possession.

When she had rested and unpacked she decided to go for a walk, and as she passed through the hotel lobby on her way out many heads were turned in her direction.

She was certainly worth looking at, with her fair loveliness in her perfectly cut fur-trimmed coat, a tiny hat pulled over her hair, which shone like burnished bronze; but intent on her own thoughts, she went straight out, looking neither to left nor right, and passing out of the hotel, almost collided with a man who had just got out of a huge yellow car.

He seemed to be in a hurry, but he paused, raising his hat with a swift apology, and Corinne had the impression of a pair of gray-blue eyes startlingly light against the olive of their owner's complexion, of a clear-cut, clean-shaven face which was one of the most attractive she had ever seen.

The man ran into the hotel, and she turned to the left, and walked on, assailed by a strange feeling of breathlessness and an odd and disturbing quickening of her heartbeats.

Corinne knew that she had never in her life set eyes on him before, and yet she had the extraordinary feeling that they had met somewhere—that they knew each other.

Madrid was only just beginning to wake up, and the gay bustle of the streets would go on all night.

Walking back to her hotel Corinne experienced a sudden wave of loneliness. She was a stranger in a strange land, masquerading under another girl's name, and if any emergency arose, she had not a friend in the world to whom she could turn. What was more, she was bound by a vow never to disclose the identity of the man who had sent her here.

She found herself wondering again why that vow had been extracted from her.

Had she been foolish to trust him? Suppose the errand on which he had sent her was not as innocent as it appeared to be?

She dismissed the thoughts impatiently, and looking up, found that she had taken the wrong turning and was in a deserted street.

As she paused she became aware of footsteps behind her, and on turning, found herself facing a well-dressed man. He took off his hat with an elaborate bow, his bold eyes fixed upon her face.

"The señorita needs an escort. Allow me to offer my services," he said glibly.

There was no mistaking his meaning, and Corinne flushed angrily.

"Thank you, I need no escort," she replied.

Turning, she was in the act of walking away when she felt a hand upon her arm, and the man's breath upon her cheek.

She stopped, regarding him steadily.

"You are making a mistake, señor."

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"One does not make a mistake where such beauty as yours is concerned," he replied.

"Will you let me go," she demanded furiously, "or else I——"

Unnoticed by either of them, a yellow car had come to an abrupt standstill not a yard away, and the man who was driving it sprang out quickly and moved closer.

"Pardon me," said a voice in English, "but can I assist you, señorita?"

With a little gasp of relief Corinne looked into the gray eyes of the man she had seen entering her hotel an hour before!

"Oh!" she cried. "Please, if you would! This man has insulted me, and he——"

"Don't be taken in, my friend," said the other man calmly. "She spoke to me first——"

"You lying cad!"

The second man seized the first by his coat collar and flung him away with such force that he measured his length on the pavement.

Cursing as he raised himself on his elbow, the other did about the last thing that was expected of him. He pulled out a whistle from his pocket and blew it loudly.

"We don't want to get in any trouble." Corine's rescuer looked at her humorously. "If you'll get in——" And almost before she knew what was happening she found herself inside his car being driven away.

Glancing at the man beside her she wondered whether his interference had just been an excuse to meet her, but the next instant she decided such a thing was impossible. This man was not that sort.

"I have to thank you so much," she said impulsively.

"Not at all. I saw that you were being molested—it is hardly safe, you know, for a beaut—for a girl to walk about Madrid at this hour. Spanish women are so protected that men of that type don't understand it when they see a girl by herself."

"You are English?" asked Corinne.

"I am half English," he replied. "My mother was English, and I was educated in Boston. My name is Ramon Sabanas.

Corinne started. She knew now why she had recognized him.

"You are the great tennis player!" she cried.

"The señorita flatters me—I certainly play tennis. But tell me," he added, "you are staying at the Ritz—at least I saw you come out of there."

So he had noticed her, too! She nodded, aware once again of that quickening of her heartbeats.

"Your friends should not have let you come out alone," he told her.

"I haven't any," she replied. "I only arrived in Madrid to-day and it is all strange to me."

Her companion favored her with a direct glance.

"Is that so?" he exclaimed. "But you ought not to be alone, you know."

As he spoke, he stopped the car in front of the hotel and getting out, turned to help her. Then he hesitated.

"Look here," he added, and there was a ring of authority in his tone, "my house happens to be in the hands of the decorators, and my aunt—the Marchese San Julien—and I are staying here. My aunt is one of the dearest people alive. I'm going to talk to her about you, and she will send you an invitation to dine with us this evening. Will you come?"

"It is very good of you," stammered Corinne, "but perhaps your aunt——"

He brushed aside her interruption with a gesture of finality.

"But of course you will," he said. "No one ever refuses my aunt's invitations." And giving her his hand, he helped her out of the car.

As his fingers closed on hers, Corinne

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felt a sudden warmth suffuse her whole being, and the color flooded up from her throat to her brows. She passed him without a word and ran hurriedly into the hotel.

He followed, his eyes fixed on her slender, graceful figure. He suddenly felt that he was walking on air. His heart was throbbing madly, every pulse in his body seemed alive, and he could have laughed aloud with happiness.

All his life no girl had ever meant anything to him—many had loved him, but he had never given them a second thought. And now he knew at last that he was in love! He had lost his heart in that first moment when he had looked into the eyes of the girl whose name he did not even yet know.

Corinne was halfway across the lobby of the hotel when he caught up with her.

"By the way," he observed casually, "you have not yet told me your name."

"Oh—my name!" she said, striving to sound as casual as he did, and steadying her voice by a tremendous effort. "It is Vilma Carreros," and turning swiftly, she left him—left him looking after her, his face deathly white, while a stricken look came in his eyes.

Vilma Carreros—the very last girl in the world whom he could ever think of making his wife—the girl he was pledged to bring to justice!

Corinne sat on the edge of the bed in the bedroom of her private suite, wearing a thin silk negligee. She had thrown it on hurriedly when a tap came at the door and going to answer it, she had been handed the note which she now held.

To the Senorita Vilma Carreros: The Marchese San Julien will be glad if Señorita Carreros will honor her and her nephew with her presence at dinner to-night—at nine in the dining room.

As she read the invitation for the third time, Corinne wondered why she should hate the idea of deceiving Ramon Sabanas. What possible harm was she doing by giving a name that was not her own? Probably after to-morrow she would never see him again, and however charming he was, he meant nothing to her. It was out of the question for her to refuse the invitation, and she rose and going to the sitting room wrote an acceptance, and ringing for a servant, gave it to him to deliver. Then she went back to slowly finish her dressing.

José Fernandez had insisted upon her bringing Vilma's trunks, and she had heaps of clothes to choose from, all of them perfect in their way. Perhaps it was because there were so many that she could not make up her mind what to wear, but at last she decided on a gold evening gown, whose long bodice and flared skirt suited the subtle slenderness of her figure to perfection.

With it she wore a necklace and earrings of amethyst. The jewels were cold, and as they touched her skin she gave a little involuntary shiver as it crossed her mind that all this finery belonged to a dead girl.

She tried to avoid remembering the still figure lying on the black-draped bier in the tiny chapel, but now the thought refused to be stifled.

With an unusual weight of depression she faced her reflection in the mirror, unable to deny that the trouble she had taken in dressing was well repaid. She was looking distinctly lovely—a golden girl from head to foot. What would Ramon Sabanas think of her appearance?—she wondered.

She turned away impatiently. What did she care what he thought? And yet the memory of his gray eyes, the touch of his hands had the power to thrill her however much she might deny it.

As she approached the entrance to the dining room she saw him waiting, tall and distinguished in his immaculate eve-

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ning clothes, and her heartbeats quickened as he moved forward to greet her.

Almost at once, as he bowed over her hand, she sensed that there was a change in his manner. She could not have told what it was, and yet she knew that it was there.

"My aunt sends you a thousand apologies," he said. "Ten minutes ago she was taken suddenly ill—it is nothing very serious as she has suffered from headaches all her life. They come on without any warning, and she is prostrated while they last. She implores that you will forgive her not joining us, and begs to remind you that since you are an American girl, there can be no scandal in your dining in the public dining room with me."

Corinne raised her brows.

"I am afraid I don't understand Spanish conventions, even though," she forced herself to add, "I am partly Spanish myself. But I am so sorry your aunt is ill."

They passed into the dining room together and a waiter came forward at once, and conducted them to the table which was reserved for them.

As the meal progressed, Corinne decided that it had been her imagination that had found anything strange in her host's manner, and the feeling that they had known each other for a long time strengthened.

She was wise enough to leave him to do most of the talking, terrified lest she should betray herself, and led him to tell her of his tennis triumphs.

After dinner they had their coffee in the Palm Court, and as they left the room Corinne caught sight of a clock and found to her amazement that it was nearly eleven. For almost two hours she had been in the company of Ramon Sabanas, and the time had passed like so many minutes.

She little dreamed that almost every moment had been agony to the man. He had watched her closely, noting the youth and the charm and the loveliness of her—telling himself that he must not let any of those things disarm him—that she was worthy of no treatment save that which he was going to mete out to her.

As she looked up she was surprised again to see that stern, cold expression in his eyes that she had noticed when they met outside the dining room. It seemed as though those gray eyes would probe the secrets of her very soul.

Just at that moment one of the hotel servants paused beside her chair asking: "Señorita Carreros?" As she answered in the affirmative, the man handed her a note, telling her that it had just come by messenger.

The envelope was marked "Urgent" and as she took it, she felt her heart miss a beat.

With a murmured apology to her companion she tore it open, and unfolding the sheet of paper it contained, glanced at the contents.

It is necessary that you should call at the place arranged to-night at midnight. To-morrow will be too late. Give the agreed password and you will receive what you require.

She folded the note hurriedly, and thrusting it into her bag, rose.

"I am so sorry," she said, "but I am afraid I shall have to go. A friend of mine who is leaving Madrid to-morrow has only just heard that I am here and —she wants me to come and see her at once."

She remembered even as she spoke that she had told him she had no friends in Madrid, and the color flamed to her face, but he did not appear to notice.

"I am unlucky," he told her as he got to his feet. "But perhaps we shall meet again to-morrow night."

"I hope so. Please tell your aunt how sorry I am that she is ill, and—thank you."

But as Corinne left him she told her-

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self that there would be no to-morrow night. She was sick of this adventure, with its lies and deception. Once she had done her errand and the papers were safe in her possession, she would leave Spain early the next morning.

It was twenty minutes to twelve as, wrapped in a long fur coat, Corinne left the hotel. She refused the doorman's offer to get her a taxi, and walked along until she found one disengaged. Hailing it, she gave the driver the address to which she had to go.

As she sank back in its dark interior her heart was beating quickly with an indefinable fear.

She tried to convince herself that there was nothing in her mission of which she need be afraid, but something seemed to be warning her, and it was brought home to her how friendless she was should any emergency arise.

Her destination was a house on the outskirts of the city, set in a courtyard behind a high wall, and as she got out of the taxi she noticed with an unpleasant thrill that a big car was just behind them, but it shot past and breathing more freely, she bade her driver wait.

The door in the wall surrounding the house opened immediately as she rang the bell.

"There will be no moon to-night," she told the man who stood there. It was the password.

Immediately he beckoned her to enter, but instead of going toward the house which was in darkness, he led the way into a lodge which was evidently his own residence. Shutting the door he faced her with a sign of caution.

"Algerez has gone," he told her. "Tell Fernandez it was safer. He will communicate with him later."

"Yes," she answered quickly, eager to have the thing finished. "The papers?"

The man lifted the lamp which was burning on the table and held it close to her.

"Ah!" he nodded. "No chance of mistaking you, señorita—the gods do

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"Pardon me," said a voice in English, "but can I assist you, señorita?"

not repeat themselves when they have created a masterpiece. But for safety's sake—let me have the other sign."

She hastily drew back her coat from her arm showing the little red cross.

The man nodded and smiled.

"Our sign," he said, a note of satisfaction in his tone. "May Spain one day run as red as that cross. Here are the papers, sister—the saints protect you."

Corinne took the package he thrust into her hand and hid it in her bag. She felt suddenly cold and afraid. What did those brutal words mean—about Spain running as red as the cross on her arm?

"One more word." Her companion laid a detaining hand on her arm. "Get away as quickly as you can, to-night if possible. If you must remain, make friends with no one—and especially beware of Ramon Sabanas!"

"Ramon Sabanas!" she cried.

"Hush! Yes—the tennis champion. He arrived in Madrid two days ago, and he is dangerous. But you have a cab waiting, and I don't want any one to notice it. Algerez will be communicating at once with the chief." As she reached the door he was beside her again.

"Are you armed?"

She shook her head, and he thrust a tiny revolver into her hand.

"Only use it in an emergency—and destroy the papers rather than let them fall into any one else's hands."

She nodded mutely, and a moment later was thankful to feel the night air on her face.

The door shut behind her and she reentered the taxi, bidding the man take her back to the Ritz.

As the cab backed and turned she pressed her hands to her throbbing temples. What could it all mean? But whatever it meant, she was certain now that José Fernandez had lied to her, that the mission she had undertaken was not the one he had represented it to be.

She was suddenly devastatingly afraid, as though the papers she carried contained something terribly dangerous.

She was filled with the impulse to destroy them there and then, and never to return to the United States at all, but she felt certain that the man she knew

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as José Fernandez would find her, although she hid at the ends of the earth, and his vengeance would be terrible.

No, the only thing to do was to get back as quickly as possible—to rid herself of the papers and try to forget the whole thing. As soon as she arrived back at the hotel she would pack, and if there was a train before daylight she would take it.

And then she remembered the warning she had just received about Ramon Sabanas! The man she had dined with that evening—what could he have to do with all this?

Deep in thought, she had not noticed the road they were taking, but now, as she glanced out of the window, she saw, to her dismay, that instead of returning to the city, they were traveling along a wide stretch of country road.

She bent forward to rap on the glass in front of her and demand to know what was happening, and remembering the revolver which had been given to her, felt in the pocket of her coat for it. At that instant the long, low note of a powerful horn sounded, the taxi slowed down, and a car which she recognized at once as the one which had passed her when she got out of the cab shot past them and stopped!

Corinne no longer doubted that something was wrong, and grasping her revolver tightly she turned to open the door nearest to her. But as she did so, the one on the far side opened. At the same instant a man appeared at the window, which she had opened, and before she could bring her own into action, she found herself looking into the muzzle of another revolver.

She opened her lips to cry out, but before any sound issued from them she was dragged backward, a man's hand over her mouth.

"Careful—don't hurt her!" said a cool voice.

A light flashed into her face, and she found herself looking up into the grimly set face of the man with whom she had dined a few hours before—Ramon Sabanas!

There was a sweet, sickening smell in her nostrils, and she knew no more.

When Corinne opened her eyes her head felt as though it would burst, her mouth was dry and burning, and for a moment everything seemed dark. Then she discovered that she was lying on a cushion-piled divan in a spacious, luxuriously furnished room.

She tried to raise herself, but the whole place revolved madly and she was obliged to lie back with closed eyes.

Then gradually everything that had happened came back to her. With a cry she felt for the papers and discovered for the first time that her evening gown had been removed and she was wrapped in a heavy satin kimono. The papers were gone!

Filled with despair, she buried her face in the cushions and did not even move when she heard the door open and some one crossed the room, bent over her, and a hand was laid on her shoulder.

"I'm sorry. I'm afraid you are feeling pretty sick, but if you will drink this, you will be all right in a few minutes."

It was Ramon Sabanas's voice!

She felt a firm arm encircling her and she was lifted, while a glass was held against her lips.

Corinne drew back as far as she could.

"How do I know that you are not going to drug me again?" she demanded.

"Don't be foolish!" he answered roughly. "What reason have I for doing so now?"

She obeyed, partly because she felt too weak to resist, and as he looked down at her, feeling her head against his shoulder, there was a bitter pain behind the hardness of his eyes. The very touch of her made his pulses leap, he

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longed to crush her close against him, to spend his soul in one long kiss upon those red, alluring lips—and immediately despised himself for the desire.

Releasing her abruptly, he laid her back upon the cushions and walked to the fireplace, where a big log fire was burning. But no one could have guessed from the coolness of his voice the storm that was raging within him.

"That is the worst of chloroform," he observed calmly. "One never knows what effect it will have."

"You are evidently used to using it," Corinne flung at him with biting contempt.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I have been obliged to, in the way of business."

Whatever he had given her was already having its effect. Her head was ceasing to throb, and her mouth felt cooler and less parched.

It was she who broke the silence.

"Perhaps you will kindly explain this outrage?" she said.

"I am afraid you are the person who will have to explain in the long run," he said. "We do not deal leniently in Spain with members of The Crimson Cross."

She sat up.

"What do you mean?"

"I think it is time we were properly introduced," he told her ironically, "or rather that I explained that, apart from my activities as an amateur tennis champion, I have been for many years a member of the king's secret service. Among all the hordes of anarchists which threaten this country, we of the secret service know that the one most to be feared is The Society of the Crimson Cross. We know that the avowed intention of that anarchist who is its head is to destroy the royalist government, and become the first president of the Spanish republic. There is no need for me to explain to you that this man is Juan Barata—José Fernandez."

Cold fear gripped her.

"But I don't understand," Corinne rose, facing him. "I came to Spain to collect papers which would save an innocent man's life——"

He burst out laughing.

"Señorita, your powers of lying are only equaled by your powers of acting, but I am beyond being taken in by them. We have been looking for you for some time. You are wanted for spying and for plotting against the government, and by rights you should be in prison now."

"Oh! but this is terrible!" she cried. "I tell you I came to Spain innocently. I had no thought of anarchy. I know nothing about it. You must listen to me, because I am not the girl you think me. I am not Vilma Carreros. Vilma Carreros is dead. I was persuaded to take her place—oh! if only I could make you believe."

Impressed in spite of himself by her manner, he gazed at her intently. Then he laughed again.

"You will tell me next that you are not a member of The Crimson Cross," he gibed.

"But I am not."

He strode to her side and, catching her by the wrist, held her in a grip of steel, pointing to the mark.

"What sort of idiot do you take me for?" he demanded angrily. "Spare yourself further lies. It is the truth and the truth alone that will have you. I ought to have given you up to the authorities immediately, but I knew that would mean certain death for you, and so I have brought you here to my house in the mountains to give you one last chance. Make a frank confession of all you know concerning the activities of The Crimson Cross, tell me where José Fernandez can be found, and I will save you. Otherwise, in three days I will give you up."

"But I tell you I am innocent!"

"And I know that you lie. You are

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a worthy agent, and—if report speaks correctly—a worthy love for the man you serve."

She flung up her head.

"Oh! how I hate you! If you believe me to be so vile, why do you bother to think of saving me?"

For an instant he was silent, looking down at her. Then:

"Because," he told her bitterly, "fool that I am, I love you!"

It was not the shock of his words which held her speechless—it was another shock which ran through her whole being, telling her beyond all hope of contradiction that she loved this man, and that her love for him belonged not to time but to eternity! He loved her, and in that moment she saw clearly what his love could mean to her were she only free to take it.

All she had to do to prove her innocence was to tell him the whole truth, to tell him where the man who had lied to her and betrayed her trust was to be found. And she could not do that because of the vow which she had taken!

"How can you love me," she said, "when you believe me to be everything that is vile and abominable?"

"Why does one love?" he asked. "Is it always because the object is perfect? There would be very little love in the world if that were so. Love is a flame which ensnares us whether we will or not—the flame which warms the world, that creates and destroys. I love you, but I despise myself for doing so. But I tell you this—if it were possible for my love to be ten thousand times stronger than it is, my country would still come first. My honor is bound up in the country I serve. I know that I was mad to bring you here at all, and yet if you would help me to bring Fernandez to justice, I should feel justified in letting you go free."

"I can never do that," she answered.

"I will give you two weeks to think it over," he told her. "At the end of that time if you still decide to keep silence, I shall take you back to Madrid, and hand you over to those more capable of dealing with you. And I warn you that your punishment will be certain death. You will be shot as a spy and a traitor."

She caught her breath.

"Very well," she said dully, "keep me here, if you will—but at the end of that time I shall be no nearer giving you the information you want, than I am tonight. Even if I would—I cannot."

"Two weeks from now," he told her, as he walked to the door, "I shall come to you for your final answer."

Corinne stood by the long window looking out over the snow-capped Pyrenees. The lodge to which Ramon Sabanas had brought her was built on the side of a steep mountain, and on every side other mountains seemed to shut away the world.

Darkness was already falling. She had been in the lodge for two weeks, and at any moment she expected the man she loved to come to her.

But she had nothing to say to him. Since he had left her she had thought until her brain felt numbed, but try though she would, she could not feel that anything justified her breaking her vow.

She turned back into the room, shivering a little, for it was cold, and the great log fires which burned day and night both in this room and the bedroom which led off it, was very necessary.

The woman who waited upon her came in to draw the curtains and turn on the lights.

"The señor will be with you in a little while," she announced.

As she went out, Corinne sank down into a deep armchair by the fire, burying her face in her hands.

She did not know that the door had opened again, and for a few moments

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Ramon Sabanas stood gazing at her. Suddenly she looked up and saw him.

"So you have come?" she said.

He nodded.

"Yes, I have been away," he said, "to Madrid, and then—to New York."

"New York!"

"Yes." He hesitated. Then: "And now I have come back to you,—Corinne."

"What?" She sprang to her feet.

"My dear, I know everything," he cried. "Can you ever forgive me?"

"But I don't understand," she faltered.

"Listen. When I went back to Madrid I exercised the right which my position in the secret service gave me, and had all your possessions searched. Everything I found only deepened my belief that you were indeed Vilma Carreros. And then I found a bag bearing the initials C. D., and in it a letter from a woman named Dora Frampton."

Corinne made no sound, but a great hope stirred in her heart. Was it Providence which made her slip her old bag in among Vilma Carreros's things?

"I flew to Southampton," he went on, "and was lucky enough to catch a boat just leaving for New York. I reached there and went to the address given in the letter. I made inquiries about Corinne Denton and I saw Mrs. Frampton, who described you to me.

"I made other inquiries regarding the people who lived in the neighborhood, and learned of a certain mysterious house in the heart of the hills where a man lived who was seldom seen and who employed only foreign servants. I was soon in touch with the authorities.

"But Fernandez was not the sort of man to accept the punishment which awaited him. Knowing that all his schemes had failed, he took a dose of poison which he always carried with him, but before he died he confessed how he had duped you. Great heavens! When I think how near I was to sending you to your death!"

He sank down wearily on a couch and somehow Corinne sensed the agony he was enduring. Without a word she went to him and put her arms about him, laying her cheek against his. His hands went out blindly, drawing her to him.

"I love you," he told her, his voice vibrant with passion. "Can you ever forgive me?"

"I love you," she answered bravely.

He opened his arms and drew her close as his lips found hers in a kiss of flame to which hers surrendered.

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Love Shy

By Vida T. Adams

WITH increasing uneasiness Marjorie sat wide-eyed in the second row center. She stared not at the suddenly illuminated stage, but at her cousin, Beryl Clinton, seated beside her.

Beryl was slim, a perfect blonde, with eyes the black-green of a shadowed mountain pool.

She grabbed Marjorie's arm, suddenly enthusiastic. "Who's the collar ad coming on, Marge? Look! walks as if he owned the entire radio jamboree!" And Beryl leaned forward, her dark eyes wide as saucers as she watched the tall, very purposeful, but reserved young man enter from the right wing and stride, alert and confident, toward the center of the stage preparatory to making a curtain speech.

"That's Dale Roberts," whispered Marjorie, thankful that the theater auditorium lights had gone out so that her cousin could not see the deep flush that flamed in her cheeks. "He's program director at KNX—the man I work for. He has charge of the jamboree this year." She hoped her voice sounded casual enough.

Beryl continued to stare at the steady-eyed man before the footlights. "Is he married? Surely some girl's grabbed him off!"

"No, he's not married," said Marjorie, struggling to make her voice sound casual. "He—he doesn't seem to care for girls. I don't think he goes out with anybody. He's sort of stony and businesslike."

"I like stony-hearted business men," said Beryl dreamily. "I've got to meet him, Marge. Maybe if I came into the office from art school, you could introduce me."

Marjorie's heart grew numb with premonition. Beryl was so very pretty and sure of herself. "He's never in one place two minutes at a time," explained Marjorie, searching for words of discouragement. "Sometimes in order to give me my instructions for the after-

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noon, he has to take me to lunch in the coffee shop under KNX. That's how little time he has."

Beryl sighed, "Lunches alone with him, and you haven't even made a dent in his armor? You're too shy, too back-numberish, Marge. Give me half your chances, and I'll do something with them."

Marjorie winced at the truth of Beryl's words. Always Dale was strictly businesslike with her, talked of continuities, of sound effects, of building up prospective programs, of radio talent. And never did he seem actually to see Marjorie as a person, to regard her as other than a business automatum. Never did he mention the really nice warm brown of her eyes, or notice that, although her clothes were not expensive, she wore them well, with an eye to enchanting color harmonies.

Marjorie now looked at him on the stage, and her heart missed a beat. Dale stood like a god, his head thrown back, his keen gray eyes flashing out over the audience of radio fans.

"Before we present our program on this, the final night of KNX's radio jamboree, I wish to express to you the pleasure KNX——" He paused and stared directly at Marjorie in the second row center, recognition lighting his features like a lamp. Then his glance flitted to the eager, excited, bewitching face of Beryl and rested there—ages, it seemed to Marjorie. Finally he was talking again, repeating: "The pleasure KNX——"

"He picked me out," breathed Beryl. "I'm sure he was staring right at me!"

Marjorie could not speak for the tight lump in her throat. Every night for a week, the length of Dale's radio jamboree, she had come alone to watch him direct. Then Beryl had arrived on the scene, coming from Fresno to stay in the apartment while she attended art school. Marjorie, not wishing to miss Dale's closing night, had brought Beryl along, and it was the first time that Dale had even noticed Marjorie was there.

Her heart dropped to unsuspected depths. Beryl was falling in love with Dale Roberts, too. And Marjorie, who loved him with all the fervent ardor of her loyal, honest heart, could not say a word. She was too shy. She couldn't put herself forward. The mere thought of whispering of her love, unrequited and hopeless as it was, filled her with trembling. Besides, how could she say a word when to Dale Roberts she was no more than a combination phonograph record and reliable piece of office furniture?

The program unfolded. As master of ceremonies, Dale introduced the Kling Oil Symphonists and disappeared while they played. He presented Grace Thornton, dramatic soprano, and stepped back stage while she sang. He brought on the Marimba players, the dramatic reader, the gypsy fortune tellers. When the final curtain fell, Beryl still sat staring at the darkened stage.

Marjorie got up. "He's not coming on again."

Slowly Beryl pulled her beret over curls the color of California autumn grass. "I've got to meet him, Marge. I met no one like him in Fresno."

Marjorie said nothing. If she had had the courage, she could have replied that, in all the world, there was no one like Dale. She ought to have said so, too, let Beryl know how she felt, but her tongue stuck to the roof of her mouth. Her shyness was like a disease, closing in around her.

In silence she boarded the street car behind Beryl. But Beryl also had nothing to say. It was not until she was letting down the wall bed in their one-room-and-kitchenette apartment that she burst out:

"I know how I can meet him, Marge! I can come in on one of those amateur audition hours on Monday that you were telling me about. Dale Roberts

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has charge of them, you said. Well, he can try me out."

Marjorie stepped into her pink-and-blue striped pajamas. She looked like an owlish little garden gnome with her tumbled brown hair, her freckled nose, and wide, startled brown eyes. "You can't do that, Beryl!" she said desperately.

"Why not?"

"Why, what talent have you to offer?"

"My voice," said Beryl, unperturbed. "Oh, I know it isn't so much; there's no power to it, but it's sweet, if a bit thin. However, that's not the point. Suppose you were only a frog and could make nothing but thin croaks—well, you'd come to audition night and make the thin croaks, if that was the way to meet a prince like Dale Roberts. Nowadays a girl can't sit at home waiting for her fate. She has to make an effort, or some other girl will cop off the prize."

Doggedly, Marjorie eyed her cousin. "You can't make yourself that cheap, Beryl—class yourself with the goggle eyes. That's what Dale calls the studio vamps. He sees right through them, sends them away without even a second look and mails them a 'regret-to-state-that-there-is-at-present-no-opening' letter. I've written a hundred of those letters if I've written one."

"Well, you can stretch a point and type one for me, too, darling, but I'm going to start working on your handsome, invincible boss. He's not handy during office hours, so I'll catch him at audition hour. You've got to fix it, Marge."

Marjorie switched off the light, and slid into bed beside Beryl. Her teeth were clenched; there was a stubborn set to her rounded chin. She might be shy of her love, but she was not such a nincompoop that she would help Beryl rush Dale. Marjorie had not remembered Beryl as so determined and bold, but then she had not seen her cousin since grade-school days, and a few years could make a great change in a person.

In the morning, quietly, like a shy wraith of a child, Marjorie slipped from bed, dressed hastily, and left the apartment before Beryl was half awake. She wanted to avoid any further complications with her cousin over Dale. In her heart was a wild hope that the day's new interests might crowd Dale from Beryl's thoughts.

But she reckoned without Beryl's persistence. When she arrived at the office, Marjorie found that Dale Roberts, early as it was, had already come in. He was not in his private office, but his hat and coat were hung on the hatrack in the corner. Marjorie stepped softly over the thick carpet to Dale's shining mahogany desk. She picked up his fountain pen and saw that it needed ink. She was filling it when Dale came in.

He came straight to his desk and sat down on a corner of it, swinging his long legs gracefully, and eying Marjorie with half-closed eyes.

"I was happy to see you at my radio jamboree." He spoke quietly and with a deep chuckle, as if he were strangely pleased and even a little excited. He had never behaved like that before. "And your cousin—she's quite a girl, isn't she?"

"My cousin!" Marjorie forced her lips to smile. "How did you know she was my cousin?"

Dale spoke slowly, with a little pause between each word, as though he enjoyed the information. "Why, she rang me up a few moments ago, said she was your cousin, and asked if she could register to sing for amateur audition tonight. Has she really a voice?"

For a moment Marjorie stood turned to stone. Beryl's boldness, her speed left her cold. She could only stammer, one blush burning out another with deeper red dye: "She—she spoke to me about it last night. I—I really don't

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know what she can do; I haven't seen her for four or five years."

Dale slid off his desk. "If it were the stage, her looks would put her over in an amateur performance. She wouldn't need much voice. But slide her in on to-night's program. If she has talent, we'll find it, and as long as she's your cousin, I'll give her my personal attention. And now get out the notebook and let's dig in. There's a big day ahead."

With her mind a milling chaos of hopelessness, it was a wonder Marjorie got the letters correct. Her pencil flew feverishly over the pages of her notebook like a tightly wound toy. She found a place for Beryl's name on the evening's program. She went home and told Beryl.

Beryl's face lighted like a four-o'clock, which suddenly finding its hour has come, bursts into bloom. Never had Marjorie seen her so pretty or so excited.

"You're on to-night after the Dinwitty Barnyard Quartet," Marjorie informed her. "That makes you third on the program." She placed upon the kitchenette table two plates of steaming bean soup. "Come on and eat. We haven't much time."

Beryl brought to the table a portfolio of music, unbuckled the straps, and sorted out the pieces. She hummed over the first bars of a song. "How's that?"

"I think you're crazy to sing at all." There was a desperate catch in Marjorie's voice that Beryl in her self-interest did not notice. "You have no training. You may even break down."

For a moment, Beryl stared at Marjorie, and her gentian-blue eyes grew dark with excitement. "You darling innocent lamb!" she exulted. "You've given me the most wonderful idea!" And she flew to Marjorie, kissed her, hugged her. "Now just watch your battling blond cousin. I'll have your big he-man roped and tied before you can wink your eyes."

Her bright confidence made Marjorie sick at heart. Beryl did not even care how she sang. All she wanted was to meet Dale Roberts.

Marjorie had no inkling of how really tragic her face was until they arrived at the broadcasting station half an hour later and she met Benny Keane in Studio M. Marjorie had left Beryl for a moment in the reception room while she went for the amateurs' register. For it was her job on amateur night to sign up all the contestants.

Benny Keane was a radio technician. He worked in the monitor room and helped regulate the programs. When there was anything wrong with the radio-broadcasting mechanism, he fixed that also, and trouble shooting had become such second nature to him that he often extended his activities to human beings. He took one look at Marjorie's face and said: "Hello, there! Why all the crape hanging?"

Marjorie, the register under her arm, stopped and looked at him. Benny was not hard to see. He had unruly sandy hair and squinty, laughing blue eyes. In his extreme youth he had sported freckles.

"My cousin's going to sing at amateur audition to-night," blurted Marjorie, "and she can't!"

"Most of them can't," said Benny in a nice comforting voice.

Marjorie looked at Benny again. He was really good-looking, and he had a way with him. She wondered if Beryl could possibly be diverted from pursuing Dale Roberts.

"How would you like to meet her?" said Marjorie, her troubled eyes pleading. "She's really very pretty."

Benny laughed, but his eyes were very serious and concerned. "Lead me to her."

It was a brief introduction, for Benny got a call a minute later from the moni-

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"Are you by any chance in love with Benny Keane?" he asked point-blank. Marjorie caught her breath with a little gasp.

tor room. Beryl looked fleetingly up at him from under curled fringes of eyelashes, looked again, and switched on all her dimples. "KNX is simply plastered with perfect men," she laughed, and her laughter was like the music of a trickling brook.

"Benny's the one who can regulate your voice—tone it down or build it up," explained Marjorie hurriedly.

Beryl again switched on all her dimples. "How wonderful!" she cried. "Then let me confide in you, Benny. My voice isn't so hot. Fix it up so I can impress Dale Roberts. You'll do that for me, won't you?" She looked at him bewitchingly from under her long lashes.

Benny grinned at her. "What do you think I am—a voice mechanic?" A curious light appeared in his eyes, intent, almost eager, but they called him back to the monitor room and the spell was broken. Marjorie had played her

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last card and lost, but somehow she couldn't give up hope.

She showed Beryl to the obscure room beyond the main studios which was reserved for amateur auditions. The place boasted an organ, a piano, and one microphone. It was filled with other contestants, girls with rolls of music, men carrying various instruments.

"I'm third in line," said Beryl, and took her place. Exactly on the hour Dale Roberts appeared with Max Wendling, KNX manager, and three other officials. All chattering stopped as if switched off.

Dale met Marjorie's eye and came over to her. Her mouth parched, she introduced Beryl. But Beryl had scant time to work her wiles just then. On the announcer's board, the red light flashed. The pianist started playing. The amateurs were on the air.

The first contestant stepped forward, and the tinkling chords of a ukulele joined with the piano. Beryl stood in line. Marjorie, watching her, thought how like a princess she waited, with her artful airs, her perfect poise. But Dale was watching Beryl also. Seeing his intent interest, Marjorie felt her heart drop to the depths of fear and misery.

Then suddenly Beryl stood in front of the microphone.

Marjorie saw her eye the instrument, a quaint, queer little contrivance on a pedestal, some of the gilt worn off the rim. But Beryl wasn't singing! She had missed her cue. Once more the pianist played the opening bars of her accompaniment. Beryl opened her mouth, but no words came, just small, cracked sounds, harsh efforts that beat on Marjorie's horror-stricken ears. Beryl was cracking up!

Then Marjorie, the true showman, came to life. For she had been in radio work too long to see a program going haywire without making an effort to rescue it. She forgot that Beryl wanted Dale Roberts, or even that Dale was there.

She ran over to the microphone, poked the music in front of Beryl, and began to croon herself. And Beryl took up the song with her.

As she sang, Beryl gathered confidence, and her voice came sweet and clear, the pianist playing expertly, bringing out the cadences. Then suddenly the song was done. Nervously somebody giggled.

Beryl swayed. Marjorie saw her, but it was Dale Roberts who caught Beryl before she reached the floor, Dale who gathered the girl in his arms, lifted her easily and bore her aloft out of the studio, her gold head pillowed in the hollow of his arm, her pretty feet dangling slippers.

Picking up Beryl's dropped opera pumps, Marjorie, shocked to the point of numbness, followed Dale and his burden into the reception room. Gently, Dale laid Beryl upon the sofa. Benny, free at the moment, got water, and Dale bathed her forehead while Benny chaffed her wrists.

At last Beryl opened her eyes. They got her to her feet, and with Dale on one side and Benny on the other, they half carried her to the taxicab which Benny had called to the curb. Marjorie followed.

"You've been wonderfully kind," Marjorie said to Dale, still standing on the sidewalk.

"Oh, I'm coming with you," announced Dale. He climbed into the cab on the other side of Beryl, who immediately cuddled up against his solid, reassuring shoulder. They rode off, leaving Benny standing gaping on the sidewalk.

It was the longest taxi ride Marjorie had ever experienced. She was wondering desperately just how much longer she could endure the agony of watching her pretty cousin play up to Dale with her soft, shy glances, her delicate cling-

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ing, when the cab stopped in front of their apartment.

"If you don't mind, I'll come right in with you and see that your cousin is perfectly all right," said Dale, and without even waiting for permission, he marched right into the apartment with Beryl clinging to his arm. Marjorie, like a sleepwalker, brought up the rear.

Together they got Beryl comfortable on the sofa where she lay in her pink silk negligee, looking for all the world like a morning-mist fairy stolen from a mountain glen. After that Dale glanced around him, taking in the soft mulberry draperies at the windows, the low fireside bench before the grate, the two big easy-chairs, the books, the softly lighted lamps.

"You have a snug little place here," he commented, staring at Marjorie as if he were seeing her for the first time.

Beryl coughed gently. "Now that you've broken in, you'll have to come often," she purred. She rearranged her robe elaborately. Her eyes, long-lashed and luminous as deep pools in shade, were opened wide to Dale's.

Marjorie flung off her hat and coat. "I'll make some tea," she said hastily, and fled to the kitchenette, her cheeks deepening to scarlet, the pain in her heart almost more than she could bear.

Working feverishly, she brewed the tea in the blue earthenware pot, and used the gold cups with the dragons charging over the sides. In the other room, she drew up the tiled-top table, and poured the tea, and passed the thin crackers.

Under the warmth of the tea and Beryl's promptings, Dale expanded, talked as Marjorie had never heard him talk before. He told of how his mother had served tea long before in the family home in Connecticut, of how he and his brother had counted the visitors to determine whether or not cakes would be left for them, of the fights he had had at school, and the girl whose pigtails he had pulled. He drank four cups of tea. He was ashamed of the number of cookies he had eaten, but he took another when Beryl urged him.

Marjorie, shyer and more miserable than ever, poured tea and somehow managed to keep her lips from quivering and her eyes from betraying her unhappiness.

The phone rang. It was Benny at KNX. Was Dale Roberts still there?

Marjorie said yes in a choked little voice. Dale looked at his watch.

"Good grief!" he cried. "It's ten o'clock!"

"Benny says to tell you your Hoosier hour goes on shortly," said Marjorie.

"I'll have to take a taxi," said Dale. Then looking at Beryl: "You're all right now, aren't you?" A moment later he stood with Marjorie at the door, tall, solemn, looking down into her face, his eyes like soft flames. "I've had a fine time. Keep the latch string out for me, will you?"

Marjorie managed to nod. He patted her on the shoulder with sudden tenderness, and then hurried out. It left Marjorie cold. In just such a fashion would a brother pat the shoulder of his sister.

She came back to the living room to find Beryl sitting bolt upright, no longer languishing. Beryl giggled.

"Well, what do you think of me as an actress? Didn't I make a realistic faint?" And she threw herself back among the pillows of the sofa, laughing. "He fell for it like a sack of sugar dumped on a doorstep, carried me out, told me his family history, and everything. How's that for fast work?"

Marjorie stood very straight and still, her eyes on the floor. "I—thought—maybe you were—putting it on. But I wasn't sure."

Beryl grimaced. "You're a sober little owl. I can see you don't approve of my methods at all, but it gets the men. You have to admit that."

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Marjorie picked up the tea tray and carried it to the kitchen. She had had about all she could endure of her cousin that evening.

At the office the next morning she found that Dale Roberts had again come early. He sat as before, frowning over a mound of mail, but at sight of her his face cleared.

"How's the patient?"

"Back at her art classes this morning," stated Marjorie.

An adventuresome smile crossed Dale's face. "I had an awfully good time last night. What if I sneak out again this evening? May I come?"

Marjorie turned away from him so that he could not see her face, which had gone swiftly gray. "We—we'll hang out the latchstring," she faltered. She gathered up a batch of filing left over from the day before and fled blindly from Dale's office, to bump headlong into Benny Keane.

He helped her pick up the spilled letters and stared a moment at the dark shadows under her eyes. "Say," he blurted, "how would you like to go to a show to-night with me? I've got the tickets already—a couple of passes going to waste if you don't say yes."

Marjorie lifted tragic eyes to his. "Dale—Dale Roberts is coming out to-night, Benny—Beryl, you know. I'll have to make tea for them."

That was the first time she had ever seen Benny angry. He seized her by the shoulders. "I wasn't born yesterday," he said. "I've got experience. I know a lot of things—more than you. I'll call for you at seven."

He would not take no for an answer. Marjorie realized that he was trying to help her, but the situation was already beyond help. Still she knew she would be miserable again with Beryl and Dale, so she finally told Benny that she would go with him. He crushed her hands in his big brown ones. "You know I'd do anything for you, Marjorie."

Marjorie sat through the show with Benny with all the patience she could summon. She imagined Beryl flaunting her loveliness before Dale, could picture her in his arms. She came back to reality with a start whenever Benny said something. He was long-suffering with her, repeating his remarks again and again, brushing aside her apologies. He was so kind that she could hardly keep the tears from her eyes. She tried to be good company, but then a picture of Dale would arise before her—the way he had stood on the stage at the jamboree, godlike, his head thrown back, or the way he sat at his desk in the office, earnestly absorbed in giving her dictation. Love was strange; you could neither will it to come nor toss it away at pleasure.

Benny took her to a restaurant for something to eat after the show. She sat on the edge of the chair, enduring the length of time until she should again be back in the apartment. She wondered if Dale had gone home yet. She bade Benny a speedy good night at the apartment door and ran up the stairs.

The place was dark. Beryl and Dale had gone out somewhere. Marjorie switched on the light. There was Beryl curled up in bed!

Marjorie stared down at her, and Beryl faced her blinking in the light.

"W-where's Dale Roberts? Did he go home early?" asked Marjorie.

For a moment they looked at each other in silence. "He came," said Beryl, "but of course he couldn't come in when he found I was alone. You might at least have gone with Benny some other night!" Her voice was scathing.

Marjorie sat down upon the arm of an overstuffed chair. "You mean he didn't stay long—he went home early—you didn't make him tea?"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, do I have to say it all over again?" Beryl flung herself into a sitting posture on the bed. "He said he was surprised you went out

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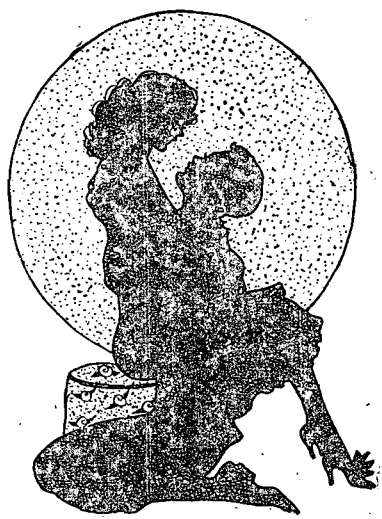
and left me alone here. He said he hadn't known you and Benny Keane were interested in each other. But he couldn't come in with me alone here, and a radio broadcast prevented him from taking me anywhere. As I said before, I should think you could at least have stayed home just this once!"

Marjorie could not feel contrite. A wisp of nameless happiness curled around her heart to be killed a second later by Beryl's next words: "Dale said he's going to have something interesting to tell me soon, but he had to make plans first."



So from the height of hope, Marjorie again descended to despondency. She switched on the light lest Beryl see too much in her face, and undressed for bed with the slow gestures of sodden despair. Something interesting about which plans had to be made could mean only one thing. Dale was in love with Beryl and would shortly make his declaration.

On leaden feet the next morning Marjorie went to the office. Dale Roberts had not yet arrived. She took off her hat and coat, began sorting mail, the personal from fan letters and straight business stuff. She had plowed halfway through when the door opened and Dale walked in, looking like a great woolly airedale in his rough tweed overcoat. Deliberately, he shed his coat and hat and hung them on the hatrack. Then he came and sat down on the edge of his desk.

"Good morning," he said, a rough rumble in his usually quiet voice.

Marjorie hastily began to finish sorting her letters so she might flee from his office. She did not look at him. "Good morning."

"Would you be so kind as to sit down a moment?" he asked, the peculiar rumble deepening in his voice.

"I—I——"

"Sit down!"

Marjorie slid into the mahogany chair, her eyes downcast.

"Look at me!" commanded Dale.

With an effort, Marjorie forced herself to meet his intent gaze. She was startled to note that his eyes were somewhat bloodshot, like those of a person suffering from sleeplessness. His face was haggard, every vestige of color drained from it.

"Are you by any chance in love with Benny Keane?" he asked point-blank.

Marjorie caught her breath with a little gasp.

"N-no," she stammered. Bewildered, her heart pounding frighteningly, she tried to get away, but Dale had seized her arms, drawn her to her feet. He stood looking down at her, white-faced, his eyes mad with eagerness.

Suddenly he said:

"I'm crazy about you—I love you! I found it out by degrees—that night you appeared at my jamboree, that night in your apartment. I thought I'd go crazy last night when I learned you'd gone out with Benny Keane. You darling, so shy, so quiet! I never knew what a dent you'd made in this old bachelor's cast-iron defense armor." He drew her to him fiercely, kissed her

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long and yearningly on her soft lips. "I love you. I can't help myself!"

He held her so tightly that Marjorie was helpless, and suddenly she did not want to fight him at all. Her unhappiness dropped from her like a drab garment, and she was clothed in light and stars. She lifted her lips to his, all the deep tender love of her heart burning in her eyes.

But even in her greatest happiness, Marjorie thought of Beryl, who had set out to win Dale Roberts. "Beryl—Beryl likes you, too," she faltered after a while.

"Bless your heart!" Dale said huskily. "Must you always think of other people?"

Still keeping an arm around her, he led her to the desk, and there with his free hand he flung upward a cascade of fan mail. "Every delivery brings more for your cousin," he explained. "With that sweet throb in her voice, singing that song, she went over big on audition night. Volume doesn't count so much, you know, but it's feeling and dramatic ability. She's got plenty of that, as shown by her fake fainting spell. We'll give her a contract, and in two weeks she'll have so many fan admirers that you and I'll be completely out of her life." Once more he drew Marjorie close to cover her small ecstatic face with kisses.

Deep in his arms, Marjorie breathed a blissful sigh. She met his eyes bravely, whispered softly how much she cared. For shy, retiring little Marjorie had reached out for her happiness, and now love lay shining in the hollow of her white hand.

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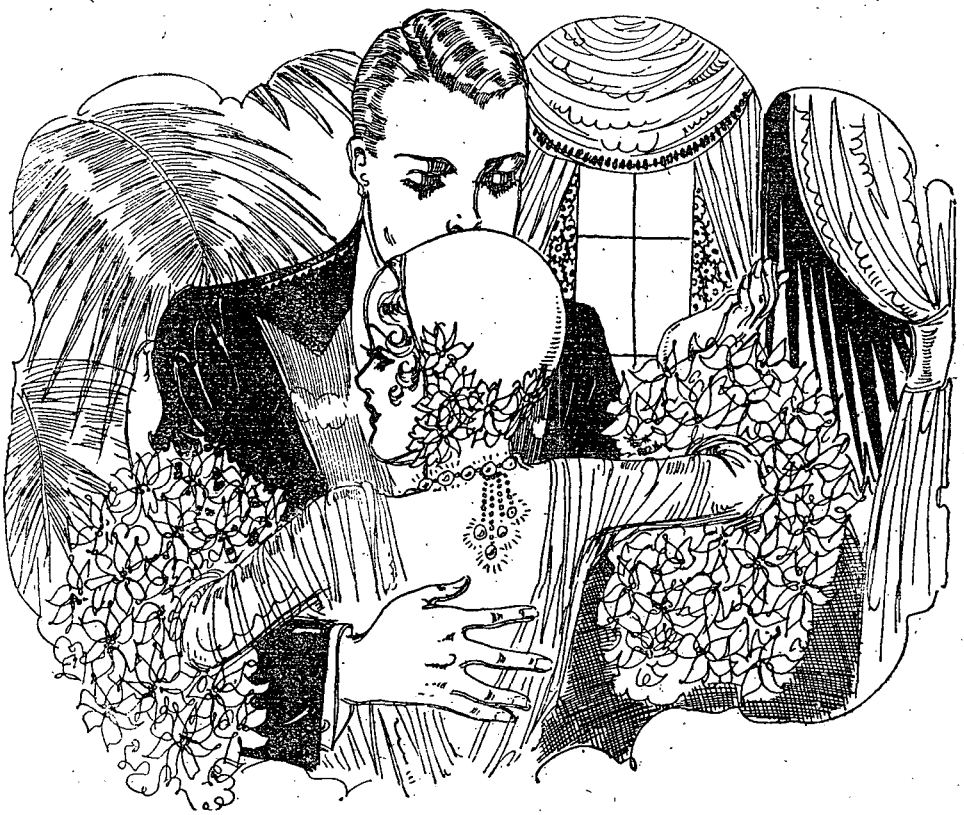

Honeymoon Heaven

By Lillian Barker

A Serial—Part III.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW YORK was in the grip of one of its famous July heat waves. Ann, after a busy day in the studio, sought the refuge of Central Park, where at least an occasional breeze was blowing.

But the minute she was out of the house her bell began ringing, till at last her landlady, no longer young or fleet of foot, came down two flights of stairs and answered it.

On the stoop of the old brownstone front, Katrina van Alstyne, stately and shabbily elegant in lavendar taffeta that shone more from age than from any natural silkiness, saw Frances Gellatley. Frances, holding by a tether, Ming Toy, her Pekingese, and looking very contrite and guilty at the sight of this old friend of her father's and mother's.

"Oh, Lady Van," apologized the girl, using the pet name Ann had originated for Mrs. van Alstyne. "I'm so sorry I made you come down all those miles and miles of stairs. Where's the maid? And where's Ann?"

"It's Thursday, the maid's day off. And Ann went to the Park just a few minutes ago. The poor child's been

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giving lessons all day. I told her I didn't see how people could dance in weather like this. But she said if they had the craze, even heat waves couldn't stop them."

"I guess that's right. It's a good thing for Ann, though, that the pupils keep on coming. She needs the money."

Katrina van Alstyne pushed back a wisp of gray hair. "I know she does," she agreed. "But sometimes I think she works too hard. For a girl brought up the way she was, never to turn a hand, I find her most remarkable."

Frances joined in the pæan of praise. "Oh, Ann's swell!" she said. "And maybe she isn't crazy about you! She says you're the grandest person in the world to live with, that you're just adorable."

The Van Alstyne smile was wholehearted. "I love Ann Beverley as if she were my own child. But, then, nobody could help loving her. She's so sweet and unselfish. But why do we stand here though, Frances? Wouldn't you like to come in and have a glass of iced tea?"

"Indeed I would, only Ming Toy needs some exercise. Look at her—trying to pull away from me! I guess I'll just toddle on over to Central Park and look for Ann."

And, eyes sparkling, she went on: "I have something perfectly marvelous to tell her. I can find her all right, too—near the Seventy-second Street entrance. That's where she goes, every chance she gets, to feed the squirrels. Ask me to tea another time, though, Lady Van, won't you? I certainly will come, too. With pleasure."

As Frances swung down the street, her dog at her heels, Katrina van Alstyne stood in the doorway, wiping her face with a white linen handkerchief, edged about with dainty white lace, remembering the days when she, also, was young and rich and carefree.

Frances found Ann in the exact spot where she'd said she would. Ann, in pale-blue georgette sports dress, was sitting on a bench under the shade of an enormous elm, throwing out handfuls of peanuts to the squirrels.

"At it again!" chided Frances as she sank down on the bench beside her and cuddled Ming Toy up in her lap. "Don't you ever get tired hulling peanuts for these little gray gormandizers? Or is it that you think they'd starve without you?"

Ann smiled. "Oh, I guess the squirrels would get on all right without me! Somebody must have fed them before I took them on as my particular responsibility. But, Frankie, they are so cute. Just look at that wise-eyed fellow there at your right! Did you ever see a squirrel's tail so bushy or so beautiful? Isn't he precious?"

"He's fairly cute," Frances conceded with a teasing smile. "But what I came to tell you, Ann, was this: Enid's planning a grand fête for August, upon our Tarrytown estate. It's to be a charity affair, for the benefit of her pet charity, the Crippled Children's Home.

THE STORY SO FAR:

ANN BEVERLY, on her way home to Savannah from New York, meets Merle Morrison on the boat and marries him. Later she finds out that he married her merely to get even with Eleanor Wallace, who had jilted him. Ann's father loses his money and becomes very ill from the shock. An operation is necessary at once to save his life, and Ann borrows the money from one of his friends. Her father recovers and Ann goes to New York and opens a studio for dancing. She dances at many society homes, her studio is a success, and she is financially successful.

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And on what a scale! My dear, you just never heard of anything like it! There are to be booths all over our grounds, which, as you know, cover acres and acres."

"Really? What kind of booths?"

"Booths where dolls, hand-painted lamp shades, fancy door stops, hand-embroidered linens—oh, booths where just everything will be sold!

"And for entertainment there'll be Punch and Judy shows, music and dancing. Now the thing Enid wants you to do is to work up a program of Dutch dances, a wooden-shoe affair."

Ann was wide-eyed. "How thrilling!" she said. "I can see myself now in a red Dutch-girl peasant dress, white apron, white bonnet, with the horns out over the ears, you know, and two long plaits of hair hanging down over the bib of my apron! Tell your mother, Frankie, I'm just carried away with the idea."

"She knew you would be. But hold your breath now, for the big surprise! What part do you suppose your little Frances is to play in the big show? You'd never guess, though, in a thousand years. The rôle of a gypsy fortune teller!"

"Why, Frankie!"

"Yes, Enid's going to tie a scarlet bandanna around my head, hook the most enormous gold hops you ever saw onto my ears, put me in a tent, call me 'Zaiza,' and have me read people's palms? Isn't it grand? I never was so excited in my life!"

"It's marvelous," Ann agreed. "But do you really and truly know anything about fortune telling, Frances?"

"More than you'd think. Enid, who's always been interested in palmistry, has read several books on the subject, and she's taught me a lot about the lines in the hand—enough to get me by, anyway. But it's all for charity, anyhow. And for me, isn't it going to be fun? I know I'll take in slues of money."

"You think so?"

"Oh, yes! The thing is going to be advertised all over Tarrytown, up in Poughkeepsie, and in all other near-by towns. It's bound to draw the crowds, and I told mother I considered it the most wonderful idea she'd ever had. You know, I can hardly wait for August."

"Nor I. But"—with a start—"what time is it? I left my watch in the studio, and I have a lesson at five. In listening to you I forgot all about it."

Frances consulted a tiny blue-enameled ticking ball attached to a platinum chain about her neck. "It's almost half past four," she said. "But, for Heaven's sake, Ann, are you honestly going to give another lesson to-day in this weather? How you ever stand it is beyond me. What a life! Why don't you marry Kev Dorrance and live like a queen instead of slaving the way you do? Goodness knows he's wild enough to marry you!"

Ann threw her last peanut to an open-mouthed squirrel, the "wise-eyed" one with the beautiful, bushy tail.

"How do you know Kev's so wild to marry me, Frankie?" she asked.

Frances threw back her head and laughed. "Why don't you ask me something hard? Isn't it a wide-open secret—Kev's weakness for you? Hasn't he cut all the other girls dead for you? Doesn't everybody know he's giving you the grand rush? Father knows it. Enid knows it. All the young things he used to play around with know it, and are perfectly furious about it, too, if you ask me.

"Yes," she went on, "only last night Enid and I had a long talk about you and Kev. And she said you were a foolish girl to turn his proposal down, or even to keep him dangling as you apparently are doing, for mother looks on him as the matrimonial prize of the town. So do I, and I'm telling you, Ann, if a fellow like Keville Dorrance

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ever asked me to marry him, one asking would be enough. Yes, sir-ee!

"But"—with a sigh—"there's only one Kev Dorrance in the world, I suppose. I've never met a fellow with all his charms or one so stunning-looking before."

Ann tapped her girl friend's shoulder thoughtfully. "Frankie, Frankie," she said, "less than a year ago I heard you say that Merle Morrison was the most stunning-looking man you'd ever seen, and it was years and years before that that you first met Kev, wasn't it?"

Frances, cornered, fumbled in her purse for a cigarette. "Want a smoke?" she asked, parrying for time.

"Thanks, not just now," declined Ann. "But you haven't answered my question. I know you do remember, though, all your ravings over Merle. You couldn't help remembering."

"Of course I remember," Frances finally admitted as she fanned the smoke away from Ann's face. "And I stick to what I said about Merle Morrison, though a while ago I just didn't have him in mind, for some reason or other. But, considering everything, he is truly the handsomest man I ever laid eyes on. Kev runs him a mighty close second, however. He's just as tall, wears his clothes with just as much swank, and if only he had Merle's marvelous dark eyes—well, he'd be every bit as handsome."

Ann pondered a strip of wondrous blue sky that peeped through the veil of elm trees over her head.

"Yes," she said, "Kev has all the charms, all the attractions you claim for him. And he is a prince of a fellow. But he hasn't Merle's eyes; those dark, soulful, irresistible eyes! Nobody could come up to Merle in looks. Still, Frances, looks aren't everything. Not by a long shot. I've thought about that so much lately."

"Well, they may not be everything, but if Merle Morrison hadn't been the Adonis he is you wouldn't have fallen in love with him, Ann Beverley, as you did! Now, would you?"

Ann's downcast eyes were contemplating a patch of sun gold on her sleeve. "I don't know how to answer that question," she replied. "All I can say, Frances, is that I fell in love with Merle. Madly, incurably in love with him. And that is the tragedy of it—I can't seem to forget him, no matter how hard I try.

"Yes," she went on, her usual soft, full-toned voice no more than a shred of itself, "the day I was married aboard the *Dixie* was the saddest day of my life. If only I'd booked passage on another ship! If only I'd never set eyes on Merle! But"—with a fatalistic wave of the hand—"there's no use talking about all that now. What's done is done. Besides, I must be going. The dancing appointment I spoke of is with Kev, and he's punctuality itself."

"He ought to be. That's all he has to think about, that boy, dancing. Just dancing—and you."

Ann stood up. "You did right to put the dancing first, Frankie. For Kev's told me more than once that my dancing captivated him before I did." Then, pulling her chum by the hand: "Come, walk with me to the studio. It's only a block or so out of your way."

Ming Toy tagging behind, the two girls strolled through the Park exit and on down Madison Avenue. As they approached a corner flower shop, Frances exclaimed:

"Seeing this florist's window makes me think of something! Something I'd meant to ask you before. About that mysterious admirer of yours who's been sending you all the gorgeous flowers lately. Have you discovered his identity yet?"

"No, I haven't. And it's most annoying."

"Annoying! Why, I call it romantic, having some one send you flowers

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every day. Still, in another way I can see why, especially after all this time, you'd want to know who the man is. But why don't you call up the shop where the flowers come from, Ann, and ask?"

"The shop! Every single box comes from a different florist."

"Then call up the different florists."

"Don't think I haven't done that, only to be told each time that the shopkeeper doesn't even know the name of the sender. And this morning two dozen sweetheart roses came, the most exquisite things! Isn't it amazing that any one could be so persistent? I wish

"How do you know Kev's so wild to marry me, Frankie?" she asked.

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I could clear the thing up. It worries me. I don't like the looks of it."

"Oh, I wouldn't let it bother me! Anyhow, Ann, the mystery will clear itself. These anonymous admirers who say it with flowers or jewels or what not always come forward and declare themselves sooner or later. I'm curious about this one, though. Curious to know exactly who he is, what he's like, and if he is quite as romantic as I imagine."

"You wouldn't be you if you weren't curious. But if I ever find out, Frankie, I'll tell you."

"You'd better. Here we are, though, at your house. So, too-loo-loo, Ann, till next time!"

"Too-loo-loo!" And Ann went on into her studio, took off her hat, sat down on a piano bench, gazed at a vase of roses on top of the grand piano, and waited for Kev Dorrance.

It was early August, and Ann's golden head was bent studiously over pages of figures when a faint rustle of silk caused her to look up.

It was Lady Van who had rustled in. Lady Van wearing the same old worn and faded lavender. Under her arm was a long white florist's box—one of the longest Ann had ever seen.

"And still they come, every single day!" observed the landlady as the box changed hands.

"Oh, look!" exclaimed Ann, untying the fancy ribbon that held the cover in place. "American Beauty roses! Aren't they gorgeous? Did you ever see such stems? They're almost as long as I am tall!

"But"—as she searched about for a card and found none, as usual—"I simply will accept no more flowers from a person who conceals his identity from me like this. Should any ever come when I'm out, Lady Van, will you please tell the boy to take them right straight back where they came from?"

"Of course, if you say so. Still," reasoned the landlady, her eyes rapturously fixed on the flowers, "when the florists themselves don't know the name of their mysterious customer, how will he, the customer, ever know that you're returning his flowers? Anyway, Ann, do you know what I've decided about this unknown admirer of yours? He's just some romantic boy who's seen you dance, who's fallen in love with you, who wants to pay you floral tribute—without meaning the least bit of harm by it."

"That's possible," Ann conceded. "Even so, I shall not accept another flower. That's final."

"But these American Beauties. What shall I do with them?" queried Lady Van.

"Take them up to your own living room and put them into that floor vase. You know, the one that stands in the center of the bay window?"

"Oh, but you're kind to give me these costly roses! It's been many a year since any American Beauties have adorned my home, I can tell you." Then, her hand on the box and her eye on Ann's desk, she added: "But I didn't mean to stay so long, dear. You were probably writing a letter."

"Oh, no," Ann explained, "I was just calculating."

"Calculating?"

"Yes. I was figuring out my account with Mr. Moore. After I send him the Gellatley check, the balance due him will be just four hundred and fifty dollars. Oh, Lady Van, won't it be marvelous when the last penny's paid? I'll feel so free. Financially free, I mean," she qualified quickly, her brows puckering.

"You're a wonderful daughter, Ann," complimented Katrina van Alstyne, moving toward the door with her flowers. "Just the sort of daughter I always longed for and never had. Maybe"—the corners of her mouth drooping with sadness—"if I had had

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children, my life wouldn't have been so hard. Certainly it wouldn't have been, it couldn't have been, so lonely. But you, dear, have brought lots of sunshine into it lately. More than you realize, I'm sure."

"Bless your heart!" said Ann, throwing an affectionate arm about her landlady's shoulder. "You don't know what a joy it is to live under the same roof with you!"

Then, as she heard the big grandfather clock in the hall upstairs chiming the noon hour, she added: "I'll tell you what let's do, Lady Van. Let's have lunch together down here in my living room! A real Southern lunch—fried chicken, hot biscuits, and vegetables swimming in butter. All cooked by me on my kitchenette stove! How does the idea strike you?"

Katrina van Alstyne's luminous eyes were her answer.

Ann, delighted, went on: "We'll have a feast, you and I, in exactly an hour. That will give me ample time in which to get everything ready. You run along, honey, put your flowers in water, play the grand lady for sixty whole minutes, then come back here to find the table all set and lunch ready."

As the once-quite-elegant lavender taffeta gayly fluttered up the stairs, Ann hurried with her luncheon preparations. Everything went along perfectly, too, everything all timed to a nicety, until almost the last minute, when, her hands sticky with dough, the phone rang.

"Of all the moments to get a call!" murmured Ann on the way to the sink, where she washed her hands before dashing into the bedroom to the telephone.

The caller was Frances. A most excited Frances, too, for, all breathlessly, she said:

"O Ann, what do you think? Dad's just bought me the most marvelous roadster. Imported, and a perfectly heavenly shade of green. My initials are being put on the door now, and I'll get it to-morrow in time to drive you up to Tarrytown."

"How thrilling!"

"But wait, child, till you see it! You're going to have forty fits over it, I know! And talk about speed!—it's a regular speed demon, has sixteen cylinders, and will do a hundred. The salesman we bought it from said so. Isn't that going some?"

"My goodness, yes!" Ann agreed. "And I'm just wild to see it, Frankie; to ride in it, too. But will you excuse me now, honey, if I run back to the stove? I'm cooking lunch for Lady Van, you see, and something may burn any minute."

"Well, fly back to your old stove, then," Frances assented, "and I'll see you to-morrow. Be ready by one, won't you?"

At lunch Ann told Lady Van all about Frances's latest gift from her father, adding:

"And she's going to drive me up to Tarrytown in this 'speed demon,' as she called it, to-morrow. Isn't that something to be set up over, though? I'm so excited over the idea I don't know what to do."

Katrina van Alstyne took plenty of time in which to butter a biscuit. Then she said:

"To be perfectly frank, Ann, I don't see why any person should be enthused over the idea of riding in any kind of car, any time, any where, with Frances Gellatley at the wheel. She's too reckless, too dangerous, too dare-devilish for words. All she thinks about is speed and more speed. It's terrible."

There was real terror in Lady Van's eyes as she continued: "Why, the last time that girl took me out—a year ago, I guess it was—I sat on the edge of the seat all the while, expecting to be killed any minute. I hope and pray you two will get up to Tarrytown and back to New York alive. But"—with a dubi-

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ous shake of the head—"if that car can truly travel at the rate of a hundred miles an hour, as you say, I shudder to think what may happen."

Ann's smile was confidence itself. "Oh, I'm not afraid, Lady Van," she said, "and you mustn't be, either. Nothing will happen, either on the way up or on the way back. Kev's going to drive me home, though, not Frances. She plans to remain in Tarrytown. The boy friend is coming up Friday, the day after the fête, just to get me."

"The day after the fête! Do you mean to tell me that Keville won't be there to see you dance?"

"He can't, unfortunately. His mother and sister are due to arrive from Bermuda Thursday, and he's simply got to stay in town to meet them. That's only decent, isn't it? I do think it's awfully sweet of him, though, to come up for me Friday, don't you? But Kev's always doing something to please me. No one could be more considerate."

With all of which Lady Van was in instant agreement. And, stirring sugar and cream into the cup of tea Ann had just handed her, she ventured:

"Keville Dorrance is the very nicest young man I know. Such breeding, such manners as he has! And what charm! You know, Ann, I often wonder why you don't marry him."

And after a momentary pause, she went on: "Now all my life I've made it a rule never to meddle in others' affairs. But I'm so fond of you, dear, that I want you to be happy, and a chance like this may never come again, you know. For, as Enid Gellatley said to me just the other day, it's a chance in a million. What an ideal couple you and Keville would make, too! I can already picture you married. You don't know how overjoyed I'd be to see you that boy's bride—if you love him. And how could any girl keep from loving a man so lovable?"

Ann was astounded. So here was even Lady Van counseling her to marry Kev! Lady Van, who, as she knew without any telling, had always scrupulously avoided meddling in other people's business. But how could she, Ann Beverley, and Keville Dorrance possibly make an ideal couple—when there was Merle? When there was that incessant tumult surging within her? That tumult of memories, of disappointments, of longings for what might have been, was not, and apparently never could be!

In silence Ann sat at the luncheon table, eating nothing, only thinking. Thinking about Merle, Keville, the past, the future. Should she break the legal shackles that bound her to a man who did not love her, and then marry Kev?

Suddenly Ann was aware that her guest was standing up, ready to go! And for minutes, Ann realized, she'd been only half conscious of her presence. What unpardonable abstraction! What guilt and remorse the little hostess felt!

"Oh, Lady Van," apologized Ann in a voice all contrite and self-condemning, "I'm so ashamed of myself. I must have seemed awfully rude and inappreciative. But I want you to know that I did, and do, appreciate your advice a whole lot. More than I can tell you."

Then, forcing a smile: "I was just sitting here weighing things and wondering if, after all, I should marry Kev; wondering if, by becoming his wife, I could truly make him happy. Even granting all you say about his being so desirable, marriage is such a serious thing, isn't it? And for Kev's sake as well as my own, I wouldn't want to make a mistake. While there is always divorce, the sufferings that such things cause are often terrible."

"My, my," Lady Van's hand went up exclamatorily, "those are tragic-sounding observations for a twenty-year-old!

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You surprise me, Ann, with your mature conclusions. But I think I'd better go and leave you alone to reflect on all I have said. And remember, child, when I tell you that you should count yourself lucky to have a suitor like Keville Dorrance I am speaking out of an experience of a lifetime."

"I shall remember," Ann said as her elderly "counselor" passed through the door and closed it softly behind her.

That night, while dancing with Keville on the crowded floor of the Elegantia Club, Ann's mind reverted, just as it had done so many times during the afternoon and evening, to the luncheon conversation with her landlady and to all the kindly, so-well-meant advice that had gone with it.

"A brand-new, shiny penny for your thoughts!" said Kev, looking down into her meditative eyes. "All evening you've had such a distracted look, as if you were in a blue funk or something. Anything bothering my little dear?"

Ann's smile was sweet, if elusive. "Nothing. That is, nothing more than usual," she answered. "But, Kevvie, you've delighted me with your dancing. No man on the floor can begin to come up to you, and I've been watching them all very carefully."

Kev grinned. "Look who's my teacher!" And shortly afterward, as the orchestra, by way of encore, swung into a waltz, he exclaimed:

"Ah, that conductor must be a mind reader! Here I was standing, clapping my hands off for more music, wishing for something slow and dreamy, and now he gives us this lovely, soulful, sentimental tune! Isn't that a swell break for you?"

"It couldn't be better. I love waltzing just as much as you do, you know. The waltz is my favorite dance."

"And why shouldn't it be when you're the most graceful waltzer in the world?" exuberated Kev as they glided off, Ann's metal cloth gown glittering silver against the black of his Tuxedo. Then, drawing her closer and closer, he whispered: "I could go on waltzing like this with you forever. Yes, little sweetness, forever—and ever!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Ann, in costume, was rehearsing for the last time the Dutch dance she intended to do the following day. For more than an hour she'd been at it, going over and over the same steps so as to make them her own, absolutely. Never did she dream, however, that she had an observer until suddenly her eye chanced to stray toward the door and she saw the smiling, ruddy-cheeked face of Gretel, Lady Van's maid.

"Why, Gretel," Ann exclaimed, switching off the victrola, "how long have you been watching me?" Then, in mock rebuke: "And you opened the door, too, didn't you? Don't deny it, now. I know I shut it."

Gretel's grin was confession enough for Ann, who understood the girl better than Gretel understood herself.

"Yes, miss, I opened the door. I heard the Dutch music and I just said to myself if I tiptoed down the steps and poked my head the least little ways in you'd never catch me."

Ann smiled. "And that's where you were wrong, wasn't it?"

"Well, yes," Gretel admitted. But, with a note of triumph in her voice, she went on: "You didn't catch me, though, till after I'd seen you do those last two Holland folk dances."

"Why," Ann asked in surprise, "how did you know they were Holland folk dances, Gretel? Have you ever seen any one dance them before?"

"Oh, yes, my mother! She was born in the old country—in Amsterdam—and more than once I've seen her do wooden-shoe steps. She can't dance as you do, though. But, then, I guess nobody can do that, and I was just watching you

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and saying to myself if I was the dancer you are I'd be the happiest girl in the world."

Ann thought of the sadness always gnawing at her heart; of the haunting tragedy of her marriage; of her indestructible love for a man who had married her while in love with another. Had any girl of her age more to sigh, to grieve, to be unhappy over? And here was Gretel envying her, wishing to be in her place!

"Gretel," said Ann in deep earnestness, "you said if you could dance as I can you'd be the happiest girl in the world. Well, that is because you don't know what it takes to make happiness. Dancing alone will never do it, you may believe me. It takes more than dancing to make one happy!

"But," she added as the girl lingered, "don't you think Lady Van will be wondering what's become of you? I'm sure she must be needing you to help her."

Ann was too awed, too stunned to speak. The idea of Eleanor Wallace's husband coming to her studio and making such declarations.

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"Isn't it so?" replied Gretel, waving a dust cloth she'd kept concealed behind her back. "I'll go back now and finish dusting the old clock in the upstairs hallway that I'd just started on when I heard your victrola playing."

But no sooner was Gretel up the stairs than the doorbell brought her scuttling back down them again.

On the stoop she found a man who asked to see Miss Beverley.

"Just a minute, sir," said Gretel, taking in with her always-curious eye every detail of the caller's well-groomed appearance, from the top of his pearl-gray hat down to the tips of his gray-spatted black oxfords. "Just a minute. I'll tell Miss Beverley you wish to see her."

Then to Ann, through a crack in the studio door only a few steps away, the girl whispered:

"A gentleman to see you, Miss Ann. An awful nice-looking one, too, dressed all in gray, with a gardenia in his coat lapel."

"I wonder who on earth he can be." Ann puckered up her brow thoughtfully. "It can't be a pupil, for I have no appointment at this hour."

"Maybe," suggested Gretel, "this is some one come to see about arranging for lessons. You can't tell."

Ann's frown became a smile. "You do use your head sometimes, don't you, Gretel?" she said. "I'll bet it is a prospective pupil. Show him in, won't you, please?"

The maid ushered the visitor into the studio and returned once again to her dusting.

But the moment Ann found herself face to face with the man, the moment she saw who he really was, the whole room went spinning before her astonished, incredulous gaze. For, unbelievable, impossible as it seemed, before her stood Count Guiccioli!

Count Luigi Guiccioli, husband of the woman who had so outrageously and unwarrantably insulted her at the Thornton Campbell party!

Ann felt her lips moving, but to no effect, for the shock of the meeting had struck her speechless. The count, too, was inarticulate, and stood staring at Ann and looking as ill at ease and as nonplused as she.

But finally, resolution in his every step, he walked over to the grand piano, against which the little dancer, so lovely in her Dutch-girl costume, was leaning, and said:

"I can see, Miss Beverley, that my coming here has shocked you, and I humbly beg your pardon for the presumption, if you care to call it that. But I had to come. Conscience drove me."

Ann looked at the nobleman through narrowed lids. What on earth was he driving at? What did he mean by saying that conscience had driven him to her studio?

"I don't understand you at all, Count Guiccioli," she replied. "After the horrible experience I had with your wife in Larchmont I certainly cannot see why you have come here this morning."

The count's eyes were very somber. And so was his voice as he answered slowly:

"If you will give me just a few minutes, Miss Beverley, I shall tell you exactly why I came. Will you grant me the favor?"

Ann glanced at the dainty Dresden clock ticking away on the mantel. "It will have to be a very few minutes," she said. "I have an appointment shortly; one that will take me out of town. And my costume, as you see, will have to be changed."

"Yes, yes, I see," the man responded. "I was just admiring you and chiding myself for having interrupted a full-dress rehearsal, or whatever it was you were doing. Still, I had to come, as I told you."

With a graceful wave of her slender

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hand, Ann motioned him to a long studio couch bright with varicolored pillows.

The count placed his hat and cane on the end of the couch, then sat down beside them while Ann made herself as comfortable as the circumstances and her heavy wooden shoes would permit on the piano bench opposite.

"Well," began Luigi Guiccioli, nervously running his gray-gloved hands together, "I wish, first of all, to apologize for the inexcusable conduct of my wife. Nothing in all my life, Miss Beverley, has ever hurt me as that did, because I saw how it had hurt you. And I held myself responsible."

Ann was touched by the unmistakable sincerity of the count's words, as well as by his manner. "But why was it your fault?" she asked.

The man unbuttoned his gloves and began pulling them off finger by finger. "Did I not pursue you to that upstairs sitting room?" he recalled. "Did I not seek you out there all alone? And wasn't it in that room that my wife found us? So why wasn't I to blame for placing you in what she calls a 'compromising position'? You can see now why I've suffered such compunction, can't you? You were so innocent, so flowerlike, the loveliest creature I had ever seen. And to think I subjected you to that outrage! You, who to me seemed the personification of all that was noble and good!

"But," he went on remorsefully, "before leaving your country—we're sailing for Naples in ten days—I wanted you to know that at least I was not guilty of any intentional wrongdoing. For my one thought in following you was only to tell you how much I admired you, how much your dancing had pleased me. And except for my wife's jealous, suspicious nature, except for the fact I feared she might be trailing me around, I should have come here long ago to set myself right with you, to beg you to forgive me."

Ann was terrified. "Well, if you're in such fear of your wife, count, don't you think, no matter how you felt, that you should have continued to stay away from me? I certainly don't want to have another fuss with her."

"Have no fear, little girl," assured the nobleman. "The countess is out of town, in Chicago, with relatives. I put her on the train yesterday afternoon, and she will not be back here till the day after to-morrow."

"Oh!" said Ann, and lapsed into silence.

A silence which her visitor took advantage of, for almost immediately he pleaded:

"Now that you've been gracious enough to hear me out, will you say the words I came here to entreat you to say? Will you tell me that you forgive me?"

Ann, naturally the most tender-hearted of mortals, felt a great wave of compassion for this man sweeping over her. It was only too evident that he had really suffered just as he claimed.

"Why, count," she said, smiling sweetly, "I never blamed you at all. It never occurred to me to blame you. I can see, though, why you did blame yourself.

"And"—going on reflectively—"as to those compliments you paid me, why, I looked on them as mere harmless gallantries that a gentleman like you would pay to any girl who'd struck his fancy. Of course, I didn't take them seriously."

The count's expression changed quickly from one of radiance to obvious disappointment.

"Ah," he complained, "you make me joyous, you lift a leaden weight from my heart by telling me that you'd never held anything against me, only to make me sad again by saying that my compliments were only harmless gallantries to you; that they didn't even seem personal.

"Well, however you took them, I

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meant them, every one. And now that I'm to sail away so soon and shall probably never see you again, I shall make bold enough to tell you something else. Just because it was my misfortune to meet you too late, the fact that I was married couldn't keep me from admiring, even worshiping you. Nothing could have prevented that—nothing! It was fate!"

"Why, Count Guiccioli," gasped Ann, "I don't get over one shock before you give me another! How could what you've just said possibly be true? You scarcely know me."

"No matter. All my life I'd dreamed of marrying a glorious, wonderful, beautiful creature like you——"

"You did marry a beautiful woman," cut in Ann. "A dazzlingly beautiful one. Even in her fury that night in Larchmont I noticed that she was beautiful."

Luigi Guiccioli let his gaze rest upon Ann.

"Of her type," he conceded, "I guess the countess would be called a beauty. But most of the women of my country are of that type; most of them have the same dark eyes, the same dark hair; and the girl of my dreams had hair like the sun and eyes like the sky. The moment I saw you I realized that you were my dream girl—my ideal. And"—with a long-drawn sigh—"it was one of life's tragedies that I met you when it was too late."

Ann was too awed, too stunned to speak. The idea of Eleanor Wallace's husband coming to her studio and making such declarations—declarations that were, apparently, as honest as they were amazing!

The resounding strikes of the big old clock in the hallway upstairs brought the count to his feet with a start.

"I have stayed way over my time," he apologized. "Way over the few minutes you said you could give me. A thousand pardons for the imposition!"

"That's all right," replied Ann as, in her wooden shoes, she went cloppingly along with him to the front door. "I'll change my clothes in a hurry."

But, on reaching the stone steps that led down to the sidewalk, the nobleman remembered something else that detained Ann even longer. "I hope you liked the flowers I sent you," he said. "Naturally, I didn't know your preferences, so I had to guess. Did they please you—the roses, the lilies, the orchids?"

Another shocking revelation! But a mystery solved—at last!

"Then you—you were the man who sent those flowers!" Ann exclaimed. "Why, Count Guiccioli, I should scold you, I know! But I shan't. They were lovely, of course. Please, though, don't send any more. I couldn't feel right about accepting them, especially after your visit this morning. May I count upon you to respect this wish of mine? It isn't so very much to ask, is it?"

"I'd like to send you flowers every day as long as I live," replied the man, "but whatever you say I shall do, I promise. And one thing more in parting, if you ever marry, Miss Beverley, as no doubt you will, marry for love, nothing else, I beg you. For a love marriage is the only kind that can ever succeed, that can possibly make you happy. Take that from me. I know."

Then it was farewell, and Ann flew up the stairs to her bedroom, where she hurried out of her dancing things into an amber-colored crêpe-de-Chine sports outfit.

"Poor Luigi Guiccioli, poor man!" she said to herself as she changed. "He's almost as miserable as I am. And to think he's married, whether he knows it or not, to the only woman Merle Morrison ever loved! What a queer tangle life is for some people, and what a hopeless tangle it is for me! I wonder what Merle would say if he knew the count

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had called me his dream girl!" she added.

Up through the Bronx, along the Grand Concourse, crowded with noonday traffic, Frances drove her new green roadster, with Ann sitting at her side and telling her of Count Guiccioli's call.

"Well, for Heaven's sake!" exclaimed Frances, pulling on the brake at a red-light signal. "What do you know about that? So it was a real, honest-to-goodness count who sent the flowers! You certainly must have him going, Ann. Now, if he weren't married——"

"But he is married," interrupted Ann, "and for that reason I made him promise never to send me another single flower. Anyway, he's going to Italy in ten days, so I suppose we'll never see each other again. I'm glad of it, too, for I don't want to see him."

"Afraid you'll fall in love with his highness?" Frances asked flippantly as the traffic light turned green and she shifted into first.

"Oh, no, not that; though he is quite attractive. But he's married, and I'd—well, I'd rather not meet him again, that's all."

"Think the countess might claw your eyes out or something? She might, at that, you know, if she's jealous."

Ann, unwilling to pursue the subject further because of a certain sympathy for and loyalty toward a man who had honored her with his homage as well as his confidence, replied:

"Married men are dangerous, whether they always mean to be or not. And my policy is to beware, to stick to the single ones."

"To Kev, for example! Well, I don't blame you, for there's a man worth sticking to. But"—as the stop signal flashed on again—"isn't it fierce trying to drive on this old Concourse? You have to stop and start every two seconds. I never saw such traffic. Wait till we get on the Boston Post Road, though. Then I'll show you something."

Ann recalled her landlady's talk the day before about Frances's mania for speed, and chuckled.

"Frankie," she said, "I like to ride fast just as much as you do, but Lady Van thinks you're too reckless, did you know it?"

"Did I know it? How could I help knowing it, after the way she's acted every single time I've ever taken her out? Her top speed's twenty or twenty-five miles an hour, can you imagine it? And she's even gone so far as to say to Enid, if she didn't watch out, I'd wind up one day with a broken neck."

"She did! Heavens, that's an awful thing to predict, Frances."

"Yes, but it doesn't frighten me. Haven't I been driving ever since I was a kid, and how many accidents have I ever had? Just a few minor ones that aren't even worth remembering. Isn't it so?"

"Of course," Ann agreed, "and I adore riding with you, especially in this new car. It's a perfect beauty, and rides so smoothly. No wonder you raved about it so. It's something to rave over."

Soon they were on the Boston Post Road, and the speedometer began climbing from forty to fifty to sixty miles an hour.

"Now we're going, aren't we?" smiled Ann.

"Yes, but not the limit, by any means," Frances complained, "for traffic even here is more congested than I'd expected to find it. Just wait till we get up 'round Irvington, though! There we're sure to have a nice, long clear stretch of road. Then just watch your little Frankie step on the gas!"

But as it turned out, Frances didn't wait for a "nice, long, clear stretch of road" to show Ann something. At that moment a high-powered, maroon-colored roadster, driven by a man in golf

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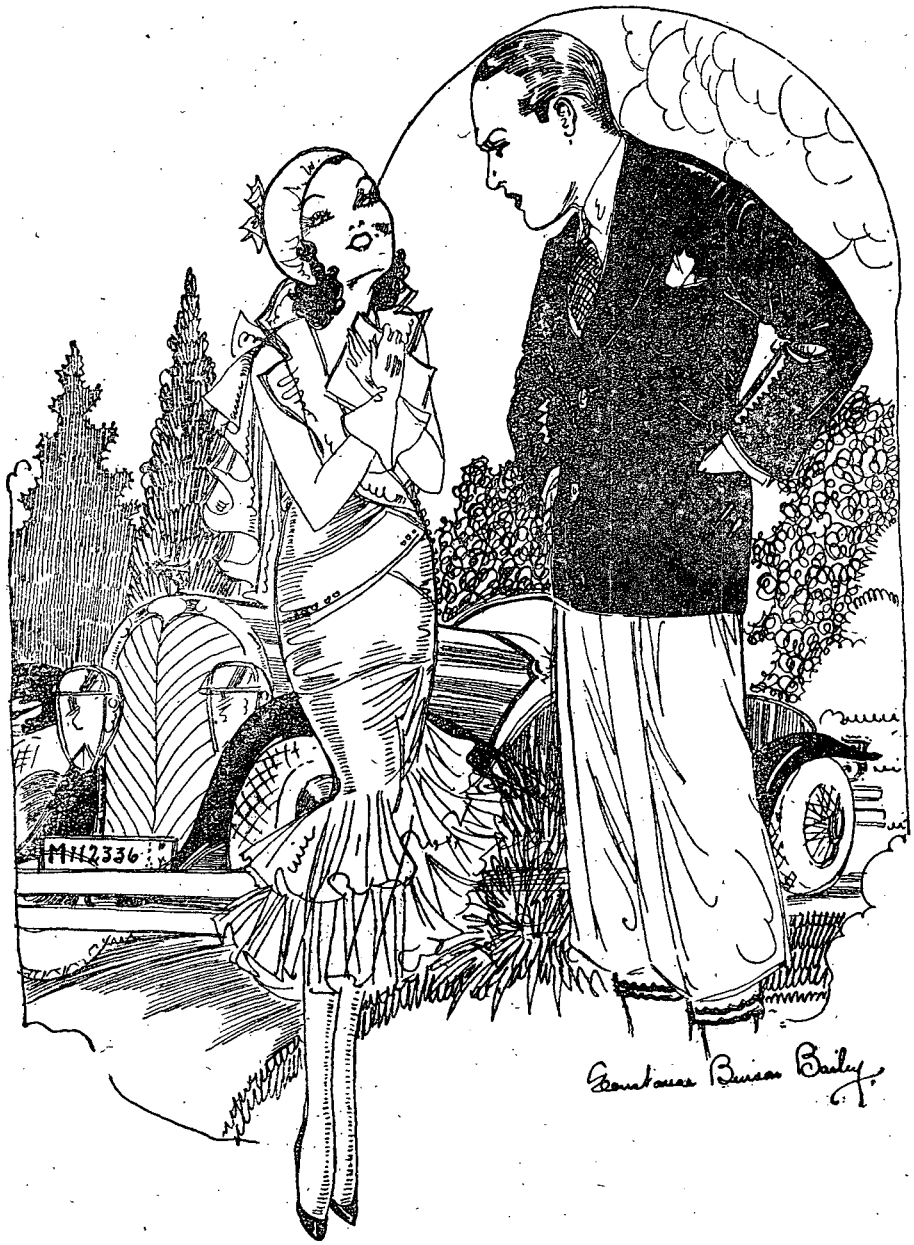

"Don't you realize, young lady, how dangerous it is to try to pass a fellow who's driving as fast as I was?"

ing togs, shot by and tore up the road like a lightning streak. That was too much for Frances Gellatley.

"Say, Ann," she exclaimed, "I passed that fellow half a mile back! I remember him and his car. He can't race by me like that and get away with it. Not this morning."

The speedometer jumped to sixty-eight, seventy, seventy-two!

Even so the maroon roadster kept leading.

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"It'll take eighty-something, I figure, to whiz by that driver," calculated Frances, her lips set in a determined line. "But whiz by him I will!"

And whiz by him she did, less than two minutes later. But not in the safe, sure way she had planned. After passing the roadster, Frances attempted to swing back to her side of the road in too sharp a curve and her own car skidded and the cars collided.

The next thing that Ann knew, her head was against the top of the "speed demon," and she was seeing stars—a whole constellation of them—from the jar of the impact.

"Oh, Ann darling, are you hurt?" she heard Frances asking in a voice that trembled. "Are you hurt? Hurry up and tell me."

"No, only jolted, Frankie, and a little bit scared. But how about you?"

"I'm all right, only I'm scared blue. I may have killed that man in the other car. What a fool I was, Ann, what a fool!"

To Frances's inexpressible relief she found the driver of the car she had run into standing in the road unhurt. A man quite young and quite attractive-looking, too, except for the scowl that was on his face.

Courageously, but with knees shaking, Frances walked up to him. "I'm sorry," she apologized, "a million times sorry. What are the damages? Anything too terrible?"

The man took off his cap and smiled. A niggardly smile it was, to be sure, but for even that Frances felt quite grateful.

"As it happens," replied her victim, "you've done nothing too terrible either to your roadster or mine, for yours isn't even scratched. But your rear bumper has ripped off my fender. I can get that fixed, however, in Irvington."

"Oh, I'm so glad! I was afraid you might be crabby and cross, and you aren't a bit, are you?"

"Well, by rights I should be, shouldn't I?" asked the stranger. "For, you know, you, that girl in your car, and I, all three of us, might be dying or even dead this very minute. As we aren't, though, what do you say if I just give you a little lecture against speeding and let it go at that?"

Frances was properly meek. "I'd say you were letting me off mighty easy," she answer humbly. "Go on with your lecture. I'm listening."

"All right. Don't you realize, young lady, how dangerous it is to try to pass a fellow who's driving as fast as I was?"

"I do now, of course. But before the accident I didn't think of danger. I was determined to outspeed you, for I figured you'd deliberately passed me, just to show that you could pass me, you know."

"Reckless girl!" exclaimed the stranger, whom Frances was finding more and more likable by the minute. "You figured me out all wrong. I was just hurrying to keep a golfing date. But"—with a twinkle in his gray-blue eyes—"if I agree to forgive you, will you pledge me your word never to pull another such stunt as you've pulled here to-day?"

"Uh-huh," said Frances. "I've really learned my lesson; honestly I have. I was afraid I might have killed you. You don't know what I went through here for a few minutes. But, before I forget it, whatever the repairs on your car, I'm going to pay them. It's the least I can do; I insist upon it."

The gray-blue eyes twinkled more than ever.

"Me let a girl pay for repairs on my car!" exclaimed the young man. "Like fun I will!" And putting the torn-off fender into his roadster, he added: "But if I don't start moving I'll never get to Tarrytown for that golfing date I spoke of."

Frances's brows went up in surprise.

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"Oh, so you're going to Tarrytown, too? That's where we are headed for."

"Really! Do you live there?"

"Only during the summer. We have a place there. Beaulieu, it's called. Maybe you've seen it."

"That great estate with the thicket of sycamore trees out front, do you mean? The one that has a white colonial mansion built on the lines of the George Washington home out in Mount Vernon?"

"Yes, that's the one. And to-morrow we're going to have a charity fête there for the crippled children. My mother is sponsoring it."

"That all sounds very interesting."

"It's going to be wonderful, too, for there'll be every sort of attraction you can imagine."

"For instance?"

"Well," enumerated Frances, her light-brown eyes sparkling like yellow diamonds, "we're to have booths of every description where you buy things, you know; lottery games, puppet shows; and on our vaudeville program will be regular big-time vaudeville acts, nothing amateurish. My friend in my car will be starred on this program. She's a dancer, you see. And what a dancer! You never saw anything like her. Then, as for me, why, I'm going to tell fortunes."

"You are!"

"Yes, I'm going to be Madame Zaiza, and be dressed like a gypsy, sit in a tent and read people's palms. Isn't it gorgeous?"

"And alluring," replied this recently struck-up acquaintance who was proving himself so interested and so affable, "for already you've won me over. I'll be there to-morrow to have you read my palm. But"—in very serious, business-like tones—"listen, before I come I want it distinctly understood that you're to tell me the truth, and nothing but the truth. I won't have any monkey business."

"There won't be any monkey business," Frances laughingly guaranteed as she jumped into her roadster, released the emergency brake, and pulled out of the way of the now-fenderless maroon car.

Beaulieu, the magnificent Gellatley estate, was all in festal array.

From flagpoles scattered about on the lawn, blue and yellow bunting was flying in the August breezes.

Booths, a long row of them, where everything was being sold, were all patriotically striped and starred with American flags.

Open-air Punch and Judy shows were evoking laugh after laugh from camp-chair spectators packed thick before their stages.

Games of chance of one kind and another were also enticing and holding their share of the crowds.

Within doors, in the enormous billiard room now converted into a vaudeville theater, Ann Beverley and other dancing, singing and talking artists were, in their various turns, contributing to the general good time everybody seemed to be having.

And all over the place fluttered Enid Gellatley, the sponsor—the promoter, really—of the gigantic benefit; a picture of smiling, radiant, almost girlish beauty in honey beige georgette, who looked far too young to have a grown-up daughter and far too competent and businesslike to be the wife of a doting banker husband.

By three o'clock in the afternoon it was evident that the fête was an overwhelming triumph. Henry Gellatley, happening to run into his busy wife on the veranda, stopped her long enough to offer congratulations.

"My dear," he said, looking pridefully down upon her over the top of his nose glasses, "you've surpassed even yourself this time, haven't you? Of course, I knew in advance that anything

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you put on would be bound to go. It always does. But to-day you've amazed even me.

"Every one seems so delighted. So generous, too, don't you think. I just left Frances in her gypsy tent, and you should see the big box of money she's taken in from her fortune telling! She isn't through yet, either, for as I passed out a very fine and prosperous-looking young man passed in."

"A Tarrytownite?"

"I can't say, for I didn't recognize the chap. But Frances seemed to know him."

"Oh, maybe he's the one she bumped into yesterday. She said he'd promised to come and have his palm read."

And Enid Gellatley's guess was right. The man sitting before Frances, clad in her colorfully Romany garb, was the good-looking stranger who owned the maroon roadster.

As Frances glanced up into his eyes and smiled, he said:

"Shouldn't I pay before you start, Zaiza? Don't you want me to cross your palm with money in true Romany fashion?"

"Why, of course," laughed Frances. "I forgot, Take out the cash."

"And how much shall I take out?"

"Anything you like. This is all for charity, you see, and there's no set price."

From a pigskin wallet came forth a new, crisp yellowback, and he went through all the gyrations of palm crossing. Gyrations which preceded antics, motions and predictions that Frances had gathered from fortune tellers along the Atlantic City Boardwalk, at Coney Island, and elsewhere.

And when she was done, her customer, with that same twinkle in his gray-blue eyes that she'd noticed the day before, said:

"I suppose what you've told me was mostly guesswork. But it wasn't such bad work at that. For you said I was soon to cross a big body of water, and I am. Next Wedneday I'm going to start on a 'round-the-world tour."

"For a fact?"

"Yes, for a fact. But I'm always starting on some kind of tour, it seems. Only a couple of months ago I returned from South America, Buenos Aires. And now the old wanderlust has me again. But here I am wasting your time talking about myself and probably keeping out another cash customer. I know I had a sweet wait before I was admitted. Anyway, I want to see your friend dance."

"Well," smiled Frances, putting the new bill into a box already layered with green and yellowbacks, "go straight into the house and ask the footman to show you to the billiard room. That's where the vaudeville program is going on, and I think you'll find Ann just beginning her number. After you watch her dance you'll see for yourself that I've told you the truth, because that girl's a star of stars!"

Nor did this young man of only one day's acquaintance find Frances's praise of Ann too fulsome. After he had seen her in all her dances, he, too, called her "a star." Not only to himself, but also to Ann, whom he overtook in the hallway, where she had fled after her last encore.

"I had to catch up with you," he said, "to tell you what I think of your dancing. Your friend boasted to me that you were a star of stars. And you are. A great star. Did you know it? But"—changing his hat from one hand to the other—"maybe you don't recognize me among all this mob of people to-day. Or maybe you wouldn't even recognize me if there weren't a mob here; I don't know."

Ann smiled her winsomest smile at him.

"Oh, but I do recognize you, though," she assured. "How could I forget a man who was so nice as you were yes-

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"How could we be happy together," she asked, tears in her voice, "when Merle, on his own confession, married me while in love with another woman?"

terday? About that collision, you know. I thought you took it rather wonderfully."

"Pshaw! There wasn't any other way to take it, was there? But come, now that you're through dancing, let's get better acquainted. I saw lots of inviting refreshment tables all picturesquely placed under the sycamore trees. Aren't you thirsty?"

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"Now that you mention it, I believe I am."

Under a sycamore tree they sat, sipped orangeade, laughed and chatted about the fête.

"You know, I reached the billiard room too late to get hold of a program, so I don't even know your name; I don't know what to call you. Won't you tell me?"

"Of course. I am Ann Beverley."

"Ann Beverley!" her companion exclaimed in a startled voice. "Your accent's Southern, I notice, but you aren't, you can't be, Ann Beverley from Savannah, Georgia!"

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"But I am Ann Beverley from Savannah, Georgia. But why are you so excited? Did you think you'd met me somewhere before yesterday?"

"Oh, no, not that! A friend of mine, however, Merle Morrison, whom I left down in Buenos Aires only a short time ago, married a girl named Ann Beverley. And she was from Savannah. Only that girl was not a professional dancer. At least, Merle didn't tell me she was."

Ann's georgette handkerchief became a ball in her hand, and her voice was only a thread as she said:

"I wasn't a professional dancer when Merle married me. That I became later. Through necessity, you see."

"So you're Merle's wife!"

"And you are——" Ann looked at him questioningly.

"Truesdale Hammond, one of Merle's closest friends. But to think we met the way we did yesterday, and that we are now sitting here at this table together! Isn't life surprising? Delightfully surprising to me, though! I wouldn't take anything for meeting and talking with Merle's wife——"

"If you can really call me that—his wife, I mean," Ann interrupted. "He told you, I suppose, all the distressing circumstances of our marriage and the separation that occurred immediately afterward?"

"No, Merle told me very little; only that you'd never lived together. But he expects to be back here, I believe, within a few months, and if you'll excuse me for butting into your business, I'd like to say something."

"What is it?" encouraged Ann.

"Well, I've been thinking that since he's such a fine fellow and you're such a lovely girl, I don't see why you two can't get together and be happy. Truly, I don't."

With the saddest eyes in the world, Ann studied a scarlet-skirted butterfly hovering over a rosebush near by.

"How could we be happy together," she asked, tears in voice as well as eyes, "when Merle, on his own confession, married me while in love with another woman? Do you see how I could possibly be happy with him, knowing that?"

"I'm sorry," apologized Truesdale Hammond. "I see now I shouldn't have brought up this subject at all, for in my blundering ignorance of the real situation, I've made things worse for you, haven't I? Please forgive me," he begged. "I was just trying to do you both a good turn."

"Yes, I know you were, and I appreciate it. But will you excuse me if I leave you now?"

And Truesdale Hammond, his own eyes misty, watched her, a crushed, sad little figure, walk slowly toward the house.

How she ever got through her last number that afternoon, Ann never knew. For the shaking experience of discovering herself in the company of Truesdale Hammond—the man who all innocently enough had bet Merle five thousand dollars that he'd never marry on the day he did marry Ann—had left her trembling like a poor, helpless, storm-tossed leaf. Yet, through an unconquerable instinct for dancing, and through a will that would not be downed, she somehow managed to do all her steps without faltering.

But once that responsibility was over, Ann, desiring to be alone with her thoughts, stole off to her bedroom upstairs.

Quite early in the evening, after fête visitors and patrons had departed, the chauffeur came in with the New York afternoon papers. And on the front page of one, boxed off conspicuously in a corner, Frances caught sight of an item that sent her bounding up the steps and into Ann's room.

"Oh, honey," she said, switching on a light and holding the paper before it, "I know you're tired and need rest,

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but I just had to come up and read this newspaper account to you! Count Guiccioli, Eleanor Wallace's husband, is dead. He died in a New York hospital this morning."

Ann, who'd been lying across the bed, propped herself up on her elbows. "Why, Frankie," she cried, "that can't be true!"

"But it is. He was thrown from his horse while riding in the Park yesterday, and internal injuries caused by that fall resulted in his death this morning."

Word by word, Frances read the article, till at last Ann was convinced of its veracity.

"He'd made all his plans to sail for Italy within ten days, he told me. But now he's gone on another journey—on his last long journey instead! Isn't it terrible?" Ann's voice was weak and bewildered.

It was not till after Frances had gone, however, that it dawned on her that Eleanor Wallace Guiccioli was a widow. And free to marry Merle, if only he were free to marry her! Merle was coming back to New York before long, too. Truesdale Hammond had said so. And he would find this woman he had always loved alone, unattached! Then what would he ask her, his wife, to do? To sever the legal ties that bound them together, that he might again ask Eleanor to become his bride?

She shuddered.

At that very possibility Ann felt as if her whole body were shrouded in ice. Ice that was getting colder and colder and colder.

TO BE CONTINUED.

MY DREAM OF YOU

LIPS that have known the soft caress of mine,
Eyes that have held the message of my own,
So hopelessly is my heart lost—is thine,
Is thine alone.

My very dreams are not my own, are yours
To keep forever. Each wish I breathe anew—
Waking, asleep—at morn or noon—implores
The love of you.

In moonlight glow, or where the pale stars throw
Their flickering radiance full upon your hair,
My soul shall speak a promise that you know
And sweetly share.

It is my hope, my tenderest dream of you
To hold you ever thus, my dearest one,
Even as now, and find you yet as true
When day is done.

BERT MURRAY FLIEGMAN.

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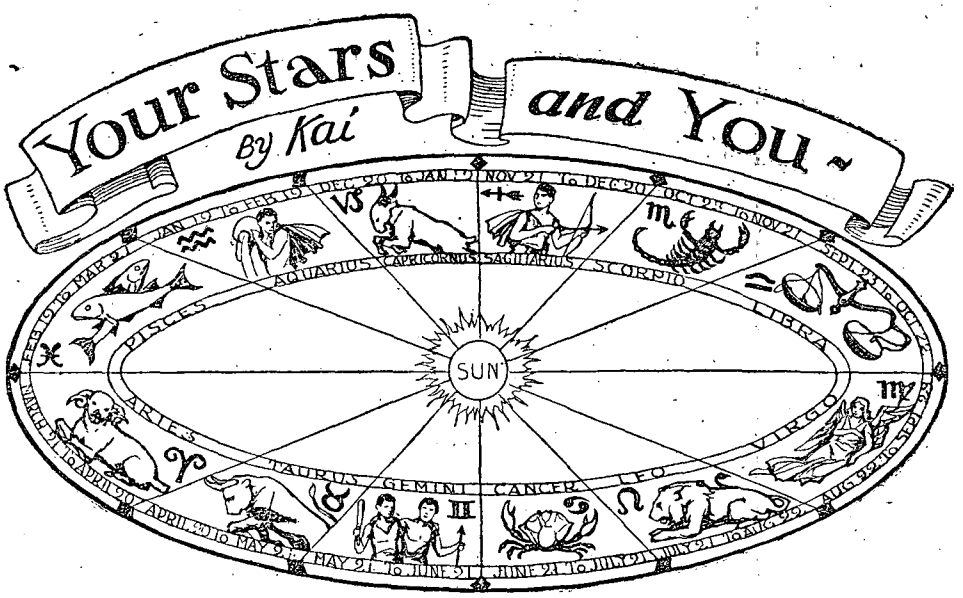

YOUR WEEK.

The main thing you want to look out for this week is not to do everything that is suggested to you and not to believe everything you are told. Watch out for promises; they will not hold water if put to the test. The general trend is emotional and you must steer clear of letting your emotions dictate your business policy. It is a confusing and irregular time, filled with ups and downs. There are some good days, however, for certain things and you should use the good hours mentioned to the best advantage.

DAY BY DAY.

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time.

Saturday, February 28th. ♄

Avoid allowing yourself to be led into circumstances that might get you in over your head. Expect delays and pessimism around five thirty in the evening. Evening not very good for social affairs. Be careful of the opposite sex around midnight.

Sunday, March 1st. ☺

Up until the Sunday supper hour you had better watch your step. It is an excitable and a restless day. Be careful of the opposite sex and don't do anything while in a confused state of mind. Better forget the emotions for the time—you might find yourself in some dark alley. Good for discussions about finances in the evening especially from eight until nine o'clock. This hour is also good for spiritual activity and church matters.

Monday, March 2nd. ☽

Day good for traveling; for making plans and for mental activity. Don't worry too much about the day as you may proceed with freedom. It is a good day for making plans and dealing intelligently with problems.

Tuesday, March 3rd. ♂

This isn't so good and you should certainly not do one thing until you think it over two or three times, at least. Follow routine; avoid deception and irritation; keep out of secret affairs and stay away from romance. Go to a movie in the evening and get a vicarious thrill out of life—it's safer. Don't do anything around one twenty and four p. m. Just think what you would like to do, but don't do it. This is general, of course. Look in the Sign Guide according to the month you were born in for your chart indications.

Wednesday, March 4th. ☿

Around five thirty p. m. today is the calmest and most stable period. Be careful of

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writings, contracts, and sales deals. Don't believe promises and be sure any promise is put into black and white, if it is anything important. Not a good day for air or water travel.

Thursday, March 5th. ♃ This is the calm after the storm. You will feel more relaxed to-day. It is a favorable time for social affairs and dealings with the opposite sex. Do not feel too optimistic, though. To-morrow isn't very good and you had better reserve your energies and store up some resistance. The time around midnight is liable to lead to exhaustive actions. Better go to bed early and sleep, restoring your recuperative powers.

Friday, March 6th. ♀ Take things easy to-day. Again, it is unfavorable for contracts, writings, and selling. Watch out for strangers while traveling and don't let your emotions rule you. Expect delays and fatigue from five to six in the late afternoon and intensity at seven thirty. The period around midnight is very confusing and uncertain. Expect an irregular day, generally.

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN——

March 21st and April 20th
(Aries ♈)

—you are in the cross-opposition group. Expect the unexpected, especially if born between April 2nd and 6th. Expect delays and losses if born between April 9th and 13th; financial difficulties if born between March 31st and April 3rd. Be careful of accidents, quarrels, and jealousy if born between April 16th and 20th.

April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)

—it is a generally good period for all born under this sign. Take advantage of any financial opportunity if you have a birthday between April 30th and May 3rd and proceed aggressively if born between May 17th and 21st. You will feel emotional if you celebrate your birthday around April 23rd and will probably meet some one this week who will attract you emotionally. Generally good for business dealings, but particularly for those born between April 20th and May 5th. Straighten up old affairs and put yourself and your house in order if born between May 10th and 14th.

May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—watch out for deception if your birthday falls between May 24th and 28th. Be careful because it is a confused mental period for you. You will have opportunities which you should grasp if born between June 4th and 7th and between June 17th and 22nd. This latter group will find sales good if they are in the selling profession.

June 21st and July 21st
(Cancer ♋)

—watch out for overoptimism, anger, and jealousy and any participation in events that would upset your house of cards. Watch out for accidents and do not travel if born between July 5th and 8th and the 20th to the 23rd. It will be an active period and you will be mentally alert if born between the 20th and 23rd.

July 21st and August 22nd
(Leo ♌)

—very favorable period if born between August 5th and 8th and July 22nd to 30th. Push your affairs and start new plans. Be careful of activity that will wear you out mentally and tax your reserve of strength if born between August 19th and 24th.

August 22nd and September 23rd
(Virgo ♍)

—do not believe all you hear and be skeptical of any proposition presented to you, especially if born between August 27th and 30th. Much better and more stable if your birthday falls between September 13th and 16th. Expect emotional upheaval and contact with the opposite sex if born between August 27th and 30th and September 17th to 23rd.

September 23rd to October 22nd
(Libra ♎)

—you are in the group of the cross-opposition. This means just what it says—everything at cross purposes and in opposition. Proceed with caution. Watch finances, marital relations, and business affairs if born between October 3rd and 8th and between the 13th and 16th.

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October 22nd and November 21st

(Scorpio ♏)

—this is a favorable time for you. Push your affairs and put over some of the things you have hoped to accomplish for many months past. Very good for stabilizing all activities and business affairs if born between November 2nd and 5th, 12th to 14th and from the 18th to the 22nd. Accentuation of love affairs for those who have birthdays between November 15th and 23rd.

November 21st and December 20th

(Sagittarius ♐)

—deceptive influences are in forces for those who have birthdays between November 25th to 29th. Put all affairs to the test before acting upon suggestions regarding them. Active and profitable if born between December 18th and 23rd and between December 4th and 7th.

December 20th to January 19th

(Capricorn ♑)

—you are in the cross-opposition group. Don't expect too much from anything. Patience with persistence and a program of waiting is about the most constructive thing you can do. Groups who must use extra care this week are those who come between January 2nd and 6th; January 10th and 13th; January 17th and 20th and January 13th and 21st.

January 19th and February 19th

(Aquarius ♒)

—you may find the next week fairly active and happy. Concentrate on artistic, social, and love affairs if born between January 20th and 22nd; on business if your birthday comes between February 15th and 20th and push all inventions and business affairs if your birthday is between February 2nd and 8th.

February 19th and March 21st

(Pisces ♓)

—it is an active and profitable time for you. Be careful of too much daydreaming and vague activity, also subnormal impressions if born between February 23rd and 26th. Business affairs will increase in activity and be favorable if born between February 19th and 27th and a financial opportunity which should be taken advantage of will be presented to you who were born between March 1st and 4th. Control the emotions but follow along with your aggressive ideas and plans if born between March 18th and 21st.

MARRIAGE INCOMPATIBILITY.

Married folks, get ready for the fireworks! If these remarks apply to your condition, take them for what they are worth. If they do not relate to your problems, these observations need not concern you.

If you had to read as many letters as I do about marriage problems, you would wonder if there were any two people in the world who were satisfied with each other.

It is a pity the little petty annoyances in life get on the nerves of humans. The trouble is that all of us are selfish in one way or another, whether we will admit it to ourselves or not. We want to dominate the people who live under the same roof as we do and this is just a desire for *power* in one form or another. Man is, and will be for many years to come, the primitive creature who must rule the roost. He cannot get over the idea that he must be the boss.

Well, there is a remedy for this if you want to use it. Consider your marriage as a partnership. If you were going into business with a person, you would control your temper; you would listen to the other person's opinions and ideas and you would try to incorporate these into your business, if you knew the bank balance depended upon it.

Put your companionship and life on a mercenary basis. Think of the almighty dollar. If you knew that your irritability and your "conscientious objections" would react upon the other partner and impair his efficiency—thereby reacting on your income—you would turn about face mighty quick, if it meant the loss of dollars.

Another thing—how about treating the person who is sharing your wealth and happiness to a little courtesy. You aren't rude to guests who come into your home; why should you take the liberty of being nasty to the person who should mean more to you than any one else in the world?

Where do any two people get, or even a group of people, who do not coöperate and pull together. Remember a house that is divided will fall. Two parts that should be standing together will not do so if the structure depends on a central cementing of the whole.

And, to you young people who are contemplating matrimony: let me tell you right now, be dead sure the person you are choosing with whom to spend the days and look at across the table three times a day, is the right one. Remember, you must have the three necessary contacts: Mental—the same outlook on life and a desire for the same mental and social recreations; Physical—an understanding

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of the make-up of the partner, that will excuse his or her eccentricities, and a definite feeling that no matter what the little everyday habits are, you will not be annoyed; Spiritual—an indefinable bond that brings a communion of spirit and understanding that will last throughout the years.

If you will remember this, you won't be writing me a year or two years hence asking, "Will these two people spend the rest of their lives together?"

Honestly, if you could see forty eleven of these letters! Unhappiness, a desire for freedom, boredom, and sixteen other things! One cannot help but wonder what the husbands and wives saw in each other in the beginning. What did you people expect to get out of marriage when you went into it? Did you expect it to be a bed of roses and one hundred per cent romance? Of course you have your troubles. Isn't that life?

Well, let me tell you something, according to the planets. Right now there is a cross opposition of four important planets in the heavens. It is hitting most folks in the home and in partnerships, reacting on the business conditions and personal feelings. As long as this position of the planets exists, you may expect limitation, financial irritation, trouble in the home and dissatisfaction with life in general—and don't take it out on the person who happens to be nearest to you.

The people especially affected are Aries (April); January (Capricorn); July (Cancer); and Libra (October). Just make up your minds right now, you people born under these signs, that you will have problems aplenty throughout 1931 and make your plans accordingly.

Sift your combination down to rock bottom and determine to adjust yourself to the conditions and reach a better understanding. If you think your marriage cannot last, then it is on the wrong foundation and your judgment was wrong in the beginning. Don't blame any one but yourself!

THE STAR QUESTION BOX

My dear Mrs. P. T. S., born April 22, 1877, you had better watch out for the rocks in the marital sea and stop this "picking" between yourself and your husband. You are fixed and opinionated, and he is supercritical. It reminds me of a chisel chipping against a brick wall. If you do not want a separation, watch out for the entire years of 1934 and 1935.

L. H. L., born November 29, 1913, four thirty p. m., nursing is all right for you as a profession. You will overdo yourself in giving service to others, however, unless you determine to concentrate on conserving your energy.

L. E. B., born July 17, 1888, ten to ten thirty p. m., New York. Yes, the positions in your chart are good but you must expect reversals from time to time with Mars square your Sun and Venus. I do not think your profession of telephone operator is as good as other things would be for you. If the chart you inclosed in your letter is correct, Jupiter rules your tenth house, which is the section of the chart where we look for the occupation, as you know. Jupiter ruling the tenth, in conjunction with the Moon, trine your Sun, indicates a Jupiterian profession. Because you know astrology let me be technical. The second house is ruled by Venus; this is the money you earn. The Sun rules your sixth house and this is the work you do. Taking all these things into consideration, you should be in the banking business in the trust department (8th house) of a bank and dealing with women. Uranus rules telephone operating and this planet is square Mercury. This is not good for the work you are doing and the least it does to you is that it promotes nervousness within yourself, due to the pressure under which you work from time to time. Take your chart, with this explanation, and figure it out for yourself. It looks clear to me.

Here you are, Mrs. A. N. A., born August 5, 1911, two a. m., coming to me to cry on my shoulder. You say: "Give me a word of advice, I assure you I will follow it, as a last resort." You people always ask for advice when you get into trouble but you are very sure of yourself until after everything goes all haywire. You, young lady, certainly believe in going to extremes. You married a kid, your own age when you were fifteen; divorced the first husband and remarried on the same day and—in Heaven's name!—to a man forty-six years of age, old enough to be your father. Pretty bad! And now, you want to find another man. Have you no other ambition but this? You had better check up on yourself. It is about time you used a little judgment. All men will be transitory in your existence until you decide to build on a foundation instead of your impulses.

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Mrs. E. R. L., born December 8, 1897: The farming and chicken-raising business is O. K. for you and your husband and I'd stick to it if I were you. Your husband has musical talent and he should keep on with his efforts at composing music, but keep it for relaxation and a hobby just now. You have talent, too, but both of you can make more money in a business that relates to earth and its products just at this time. This year is better for you than the past five years.

The eternal triangle! Mrs. E. F., born November 19, 1901; her husband, born April 20, 1897; the other man, born November 5, 1900. 'Twas ever thus! As I write this, Saturn is conjuncting your Venus and you will have experienced an emotional storm before these lines ever reach your eyes. Saturn brings limitation into your life, and Venus rules the emotions. I could be hard and say you have no business allowing yourself to indulge in this love affair with your "childhood sweetheart," but I honestly think you have suffered enough. Nevertheless, you married your husband, and your first duty is to him. Make up your mind you will suffer through love, and while I know the present few months are hard on you, you would have experienced the same thing no matter whom you married. So why not be philosophical about it? You had the same planetary influences in April and May, 1930, and during December. Don't feel too sorry for yourself. The other man will find some one else in 1932, and you will have given him up mentally long before that time arrives. Anyway, his affections are not as stable as yours are, and he has been interested elsewhere, while you have been breaking your heart over him. Believe me when I say the stars are much more favorable for a permanent affection between yourself and your husband than with the other man.

You have ability, Miss H. E. C., born November 15, 1895, in England, and you have ambition. You say frankly you have failed to seize your opportunities. It is about time you decided what you are going to do, isn't it? I don't have to tell you what to do. You probably asked me just to have me agree with your own judgment about yourself. You are positive and fixed, and have definite ideas of what you wish to accomplish. Get into the business world and go after what you want. The influences of 1924 and through to 1926 were very bad for you, but do not let that dull period dictate your future activity. You were just slowed up temporarily. Follow a commercial career and combine your shrewdness with your artistic ability. All you have to do is make up your mind.

Miss M. P., born October 19, 1914, one thirty a. m., I think dress designing would be better for you than the illustrator or the interior decorating angles, although you could do any of these well. You have definite artistic ability, and while you could follow interior decorating profitably, I think your sense of color and awareness of clothes and style would be better for you in every way.

Mrs. R. I. F., born April 5, 1882; husband born November 7, 1877; your problem is a tough one, and you have, and have had, something to handle in your husband's temperament. Do not give up now, after twenty-eight years. Stick to your ground and use your head. You will be tempted to jump over the traces during the next six months, and if you do not meet every situation with the determination and will power of your Scorpio husband, you will lose out in the fight. You are more excitable than he is, and it would be a good thing for you to remember that the man who wins the battle is the man who keeps his head and persists in the offensive to the finish. You are under Uranus, and it will not do much good for me to say it is unwise for you to make a business change just now. You will probably be forced into doing so against your will, through circumstances. Keep on trying to adjust yourself and make the best of conditions. When the time comes for you to make the real decision, you will know what to do. Just keep a clear head—that's the answer.

Mrs. A. C. P., you are not as bad off as you think. Husband born July 24, 1896, wife born July 28, 1900. Your working program is a good arrangement, and you are just in line with the economic depression right now. Your connections with the motor industry will bring better returns in 1931, as the automotive industry will pick up in business. Keep up the good work; you are fixed all right.

M. G. A., born January 16, 1898, seven thirty p. m., husband born May 14, 1894. You may as well allow your husband to have his conviction about naturopathy. You could not change his conviction about this, and eventually it will prove to be profitable. The early spring months look favorable for him, and you might as well decide to be just a housewife for a while longer. You have a good business head, but now is not the time

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for you to make a change into business. Your influences just now are not favorable, and the limited financial condition will not be relieved until the spring of 1932. Critical periods for you are in February, July and November, 1931. Just be patient.

Mighty nice of you, Paul, born February 1, 1898, to say all the nice things about our publications and this department. Your choice of the baking business is all right. Your chart is one that experiences unexpected reversals from time to time, and until you get to the point where you can afford to indulge yourself in these writing fancies, you had better stick to business. Stop trying to scatter your forces into many directions. Perhaps you can do all these forty eleven things you say, but the secret of success, young man, is in being able to do one thing well. Stay out of aviation! Sorry, but I cannot send you a personal reading.

M. O., born August 29, 1896, two forty-five a. m., better check up on the partnership angle in business and steer clear of marriage. In marrying just now, you would be inclined to look at life through rose-colored glasses and dream dreams that would turn out to be bubbles later. This Neptunian influence you are under at this time brings deception, and while it is O. K. to send your money to the partner in business, it might be well to check up on what is being done. Forget your partner is a relative; business is business, and you cannot afford to take the chance right now. Your influences are too much inclined to make you the victim of manipulated funds.

Mrs. J. E. K., born October 26, 1899, in late afternoon, wishes to know the signs under which she and her husband, born September 24, 1897, entered the world. When you were born, Mrs. K., your sun was in Scorpio, and the moon in Leo. You have four other planets in Scorpio, and this gives you strong qualities in the November sign. Your husband has the sun in Libra and the moon in Virgo, also Jupiter and Venus in Virgo; two planets in Scorpio. Glad you like our astrological department, and hope you continue to be one of its steady readers.

I would like to answer the question of Frances, born December 1, 1892, regarding the stroke she had, but I could not do so without more definite data. If you will send in her place of birth—city and State—and the time of day or night she was born and repeat the question, I shall try to help her.

Notice you sent me two letters this week, J. J. H., born April 12, 1887, at noon, and I am interested in the good words you pass out about astrology in general and this department in particular. Thanks for the funny story. Dealing with so many serious problems makes a little humor acceptable now and then. Some of the customers' letters are very interesting, and I realize you cannot be humorous when you have problems that are a matter of life and death to you. I cannot dictate your actions—only suggest the way. The map of the heavens at the time you were born is only a road map on the highway of life. If you want to know about the detours and avoid them, that's your business, not mine. I've seen automobile drivers deliberately take the bumps and the holes when they knew the road was full of them, and a lot of stubborn people I know do the same thing, no matter how much advice they get. Am interested in your desire to study astrology or psychology. They go together, so why not combine them. You are a true pioneer. Keep up the good work.

Ethel, born May 19, 1901; without your time of birth and that of your husband, born August 15, 1898, I cannot answer your question definitely as to whether your husband will succeed in radio work. Beginning this week you may expect your life to take a turn for the better. There isn't much difference in whether you remain in Phoenix or go to Tucson for your husband's health. I believe, however, Tucson has a dryer climate. Your husband's health will improve this year, as his chart shows he will overcome his lung trouble, although I doubt whether you will ever be able to live in the Eastern part of the United States.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through LOVE STORY MAGAZINE. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.

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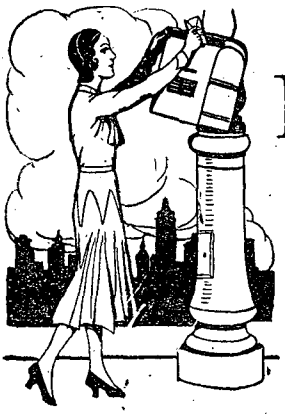

The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to make friends

Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, "Love Story Magazine," 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

HERE'S some one who has lived through thrills! A bus driver's life isn't just a matter of brakes and carburetors. Mike has had adventures on these long drives, has known the breathlessness of suspense, the tenseness of drama. Hear about his passengers and the situations he meets with them. He'll show you that manly courage is as alive to-day as it was in the days of stagecoaches and covered wagons!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a nineteen-year-old bus driver, looking for a Pal who is all man. I like to go hunting, have been in a holdup, and have had many interesting things happen to me while driving the bus. Don't overlook me, Pals. MIKE.

A deep thinker and a true friend.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm in a sanitarium with nothing to do but lie in bed all day. I'm a boy of twenty-two, have traveled in the West, and expect to settle there as soon as the doctors say I'm well enough. I'd especially like to hear from boys interested in philosophy, psychology, and poetry. Come on, boys, liven up my dull days.

BARRY OF BALTIMORE.

Get out in the open!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a bachelor, thirty-two years old, living by myself. I'm fond of the outdoor life, but my job allows me to enjoy it only in the summertime. Swimming, camping, and touring with a congenial companion are my hobbies. I'd like to hear from bachelors from twenty to forty years of age. CANADA BACHELOR.

A girl of extremes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a brunette of nineteen summers, either sad or happy, loving or hateful. I live down in the land of cotton, and when I hear a train whistle it makes me blue for friends. Pen Pals, write to me —I'm hanging out the friendship banner!

MISSOURI DREAM GIRL.

A man of thought and humor.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like to have Pals between the ages of twenty and thirty who can see the laughter in life and who are interested in good books, philosophy, travel, and writing. I'm a world-wide traveler, beginning to sell my stories, a New England ex-high-school teacher, married, with a charming wife and lovely little daughter. Don't forget to write to me.

RESIDENT OF WASHINGTON.

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Give her a taste of country friendliness.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just a lonesome country girl in a great big, cold city. I was raised in the country, and can tell a lot about my experiences there. I'm just fifteen, lonesome for new friends. SYLVIA ROSE.

A hero of the football season.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-three, have been married, and am good in nearly all sports. I have been recovering from a broken leg I got playing football. I want to write to all boys—whether they're interested in football or not.

BATTLING BUDDY.

A lover of art and home.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I haven't been in robust health lately, and hope you girls will cheer me up. I'm a girl of seventeen, interested in sports, with a special love for drawing and interior decorating. Here's hoping for new friends soon.

LITTLE NEW YORKER.

A troubled wife.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm all alone in a strange place with a sick husband and my three children. I'm a woman of thirty-two, tall, with blue eyes and blond hair. Please write, everybody; I need your friendship.

WOMAN OF PITTSBURGH.

A West Indies bride.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I do hope you can find me plenty of correspondents. I've been married to a Porto Rican for three years, am American, tall, twenty-two years old. All you girls please write to a happy wife.

ROSE OF NEW YORK CITY.

All ready for opera.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm dropping my letter in your mail mox. I'm a boy of twenty, rather plump and jolly. My interests are social work and music, and I am preparing to appear in opera and on the concert stage. I'm hoping to hear from a lot of fun-loving fellows. PORKY.

Her voice has a smile.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like to hear from girls all over the good old United States. I'm a telephone operator in New Jersey, and have lots of spare time. I'm a girl of twenty-two, and can write interestingly about my work and recreation.

A LINEMAN'S PAL.

With all a modern girl's interests.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Are you looking for a Pen Pal, girls? Well, here I am, out in California, a girl of eighteen, with dancing, swimming, miniature golf, and letter writing for my hobbies. I'll try to interest you all.

LITTLE HAPPY.

Get into her scrapbook.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: All my friends have Pen Pals; I want some, too. I'm a girl of eighteen, write stories and articles and also collect scrapbooks and Western material. It's lonesome here, and I'll welcome letters.

PENNSYLVANIA WRITER.

An adventurous spirit.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Columbus took a chance, and see what he found! I'm taking a chance that some one will write to me. I'm not going to tell what I look like, but I'm a Lithuanian girl, twenty-two years old. Let's see how many States will call me "friend." ANNE OF ILLINOIS.

In the midst of America's wonders.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman with two lovely children. We're close to Pikes Peak and the Garden of the Gods, out in Colorado, and spend a great deal of time in the Rockies. I'd like to know about carpenter work in and near the timbered country, as my husband is a carpenter. Everybody write; I can tell things and be your friend. COLORADO MOTHER.

Some one who'll share your hopes.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a dreamer; who wants to dream along with me? I'm a girl with green eyes and light-brown hair, and I'd like to hear from girls who dream, too. Don't fail me. LA VAUN.

Voting for friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want to know every one in your Corner. I'm a girl of seventeen, with black hair and green eyes, especially fond of dancing, singing, and writing. I'm gay but sometimes quiet, but will be a good Pal to all up here in Montreal.

CANADIAN BETTY.

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She knows Scotch moors and heather.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Scotch girl who has been in the United States a little over a year, and is now living in Brooklyn. I've been traveling a great deal and miss friends. Won't you girls write to a gray-eyed, auburn-haired Pal? SCOTCH DAISY.

Climbing up the literary ladder.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a struggling young writer of twenty-three summers, and I'd like to hear from others interested in writing or reading. I'm a stone's throw from Broadway, and I'd be glad to tell Pals about it in exchange for news of their own locality. I have dark eyes and dark hair, and I love life. Won't somebody please write? JERSEY GIRL.

A club for brides.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an eighteen-year-old wife with dark-brown hair and eyes, especially fond of fancy work and sewing. I'd like to hear from brides and brides-to-be; in fact, from all girls who would care to write. BROWN-EYED MAY.

A missionary with a hobby.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have a hobby, and I'm looking to your Corner for help. I'm making a collection of postmarks and handwriting, and would like to write to girls of all ages, temperaments, and styles. I've been a missionary in Mexico, and have traveled a great deal. Girls, let's be friends.

L. McL.

A Massachusetts sportswoman.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a girl lonesome for Pen Pals. My card of introduction should state that I live in Massachusetts, have brown hair, blue eyes, and am fourteen years of age. I'm fond of all sports. Girls in all parts of the world, write to me. SOPHIE.

Out for the happiness in life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I come in? I'm just nineteen, with brown eyes, not-quite-red hair, and freckles, a girl who's full of fun, in love with the world, and craving excitement. I don't guarantee adventurous letters; but all those interested in dancing, tennis, or just anything write to

PLAIN DUMB.

She challenges curiosity.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, living in California. That's all I'll tell about myself now. Won't some of you girls take pity on me and write?

MYSTERIOUS FRANCES.

Learn about a new wonder of the air.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a radio-broadcasting engineer, and although my work is interesting, I get lonesome. I'll gladly tell all pals about broadcasting and television. I'm a man of twenty-eight, always ready to enjoy things. Help drive away my spells of lonesomeness, whether you're a radio fan or not! WAVE LENGTH.

Hear about that stern coast.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you let a blue-eyed, blond-haired girl come into your Corner? I can tell Pals all they want to know about the New England States. My hobbies are aviation, horseback riding, and motor boating. Girls, write to me and be my friends. BLONDE OF WESTFIELD.

Seeking higher education.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want Pen Pals—lots of them, from every State and every country. I'm a boy living on Long Island, a university student waiting for friends.

LU.

A thorough musician.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm looking for Pals, especially those living in foreign countries. I'm an eighteen-year-old girl with hazel eyes and brown hair, play ten musical instruments, sing, and am also an acrobatic dancer. I've been behind the footlights, and like to sew and write letters. Everybody write to

MUSICAL PAL.

First aid to pets.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I have plenty of writing paper and a good strong arm to write with, so, Pals, remember a lonesome fellow of eighteen. I'm interested in surgical work on poultry, so if you Pals have any pets, I'll do all I can to help them out.

POULTRY FANCIER.

A child of rhythm.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm fifteen years old, and my hobby is dancing. I take lessons in

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toe, tap, tango, and adagio, and have appeared in public a number of times. I'm the only child in the family, and I get lonesome. Please, girls, write to IRIS.

Waiting for the hunting season.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm turning to you for help, as I want Pen Pals. I'm twenty years old, married, and live in Colorado. I love to hunt rabbits, and there are lots of them here to hunt. Please write to me, some one. YOUNG MARRIED LADY.

Go in for illustrated correspondence.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a pen-and-ink artist, a boy of twenty-five, Canadian-born, fond of dancing and swimming. I'll adorn my letterheads with a sketch, and hope to hear from every one.

BUDDY OF VICTORIA.

Lonesome for the hospitable South.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Virginia girl, living in New York, and I get mighty homesick. I'm seventeen, slim, with green eyes and light-brown hair. I love music and reading, and hope for friends, too.

VIRGINIA-BRED.

A lover of nature.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy, twenty-one years old, who likes outdoor sports. I love the woods and rivers and like to camp and hike. I'm very fond of a home, but like to travel also. Won't you boys, especially those from the West, write to me?

INDIANA CAMPER.

A devoted daughter.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of twenty-one, who has traveled in many States, but am now living at home, as my mother is ill. It's lonesome out in this little Kansas town, and I'd love to have Pen Pals. I'm fond of dancing, swimming, and tennis, but most of all I want to make friends!

STAY-AT-HOME DOLLY.

A lonesome navy flyer.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a lonely sailor, nineteen years of age, and I sure would appreciate Pals. I can tell all about aviation, as I am a transport pilot with eight hundred and sixty-two hours of solo flight to my credit. I'm a regular sport, crazy over golf, swimming, and dancing.

THE FLYING FOOL.

He knows New York.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I think you're doing wonderful work in your column. Please do something for me. I'm a man of twenty-five, interested in reading, good shows, and congenial people. I've been in and out of New York several times. I want congenial, loyal friends about my own age or older.

NEW YORK MAN.

Beautifying the home.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Corner? I'm a twenty-two-year-old girl, fond of dancing and all outdoor sports. Collecting poems is my hobby, and I'm especially interested in interior decorating. Don't forget lonely little CAROLINA PAT.

Out in the city of action!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of fifteen, with blue eyes and brown hair, and I'm waiting for Pen Pals. My home is in the suburbs of Chicago, and I'm ready to describe all the interesting places of my city. Letters from any one will be hailed with delight. DOLLY OF CHICAGO.

Ready for life's excitement.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a black-haired, dark-eyed boy, twenty-one years old, and I want to see what it's like to write to people I don't know. I like to dance, swim, play football and basket ball; in fact, do anything that has any kick to it. Boys, let's get acquainted. THRILL-HUNTING BILL.

She's true to the navy, too.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I sure would love to hear from girls, especially those interested in the old U. S. N. I've been a sailor's wife for two years, and am now living in Norfolk. Girls, dig out your fountain pens and get busy. A NAVY BRIDE.

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The Friend In Need

Department

CONDUCTED BY

Laura Alston Brown

HOW much does a girl owe her parents? Has an invalid, widowed mother the right to demand that her daughter give up all normal, girlish pleasures, even health, in order to save the mother's pride?

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am twenty-one years of age, slim, and people tell me that I am attractive. My father has been dead for three years, and my mother is a semiinvalid. The doctors do not seem to be able to find her trouble, but she cannot get out of bed. She has to be propped up with pillows in the daytime.

My father left us only enough for his funeral expenses, so I am the only support my mother has. I am a stenographer in the daytime and sell tickets at a dance hall at night. I also have to prepare our meals. I do our housework—mopping, dusting, washing, and ironing—on Sundays.

I work in the office six days and sell tickets on seven nights, so you see my hands are full. This is my problem: My mother has gotten me frantic with her perpetual nagging. She wishes she weren't so lonely; she wishes we had a better house; she wishes I wouldn't let fellows walk home with me from work—she's afraid I'll fall in love—she wants me to go to church Sunday mornings—imagine, with my washing and ironing and work at night!

Sometimes—it's terrible to say it—I feel like ending it all. Work, work, work! Will I ever see the end of it? I can't marry; no fellow would put up with mother, I know.

Sometimes I have to stop my typing and just hold tight to keep from screaming and tearing my hair, I'm so infernally tired. I get up at six thirty and I don't get home from the pavilion until three a. m. Do you wonder how I stand it? I do. I'm five feet six and I weigh only one hundred pounds.

What can I do? I earn only twenty dollars a week as a stenographer and fourteen dollars a week selling tickets. That makes thirty-four dollars a week for two people to live on. Rent, groceries, lights, water, and phone—mother quite rightly insists on that—and about two and a half dollars a week for magazines for mother.

I suggested once that she do embroidering for people. She used to do it beautifully. But she says that it would be admitting we are poor.

I am a nervous wreck, irritable, and hardly fit to live with. Mrs. Brown, please, please, help me. STORM TOSSED.

Naturally you're a nervous wreck, Storm Tossed; the human body wasn't made to withstand that sort of treatment. If your mother can help out in some way, so that you needn't work like that, it's criminal of her to refuse.

As a matter of fact, it would make her happier, too. Lying alone like that for hours, with nothing in particular to do, is as hard on the nerves as carrying a load like yours. Why don't you tell her doctor to prescribe some light work for her? She'll probably take his advice more readily than yours.

If your mother won't consent to that, it might be possible to persuade her to go into some semiprivate home. She could have company there constantly, and she'd probably have a much happier time than she has now. On the other hand, you could give up the apartment and lighten your load by at least that much.

Talk it over frankly with your

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mother; put the alternatives plainly before her. The present state of affairs can't possibly continue for long, and perhaps the doctor can convince your mother that your health can't stand it. You might remind her that there's no point in killing the goose which lays the golden eggs.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: You hear so much about boys and girls of to-day being no good. Well, I've met both good and bad ones, and I'm glad to say the good outnumbered the bad.

I week ago I attended an Epworth League service in a neighboring church. There were one hundred and twenty-one young fellows and girls there, and most of them were boys. This group is about the peppiest bunch I've had the pleasure of meeting, not a dull minute during the whole service.

If some of the boys and girls who are looking for the right kind of associates will get connected with a group like this, they won't want for good, clean entertainment.

Some time ago I read several letters for and against step-parents. Well, I have a stepfather, and what's more, I'm proud of him. My own father has married again, and he isn't treating his present wife any better than he treated my mother. I'm glad I look like my mother and also act like her. I certainly don't blame her for getting me a nicer father and also a brother whom I worship.

My only real problem is to help make ends meet. I've been used to having almost everything I wanted, and now I'm the main support of a family of six. Dad's work has been so slow that he makes less than I do of late. My grandmother and a maiden aunt also live with us, thus making six.

We have so little, and yet there are lots of others who are so much worse-off than we that I do manage a little pleasure by helping them in a small way.

I always like a description of the writer, so I'll tell you what I look like. I'm a brunette, five feet six, stout, and twenty years old. I'm not so bad-looking, I'm told. I've had several boys friends already, but Mr. Right hasn't come along yet. WATSIE.

Yes, it's really a simple matter to make the right kind of friends, when you come right down to essentials. You have only to decide what kind is the right kind for you, and then go about to places where you can meet that kind. The trouble comes, of course, when you try to be a little brown mouse one minute and a lightning bug the next.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am in the same boat as Desperate Joan, but I am not quite so badly off as she is. I am putting my case into the hands of the law, because my "most wonderful man in the world" ran off about four weeks ago.

He kept saying he intended to marry me, but he put the date off from month to month; we were to wait only until he had some money saved. Well, when he got the money he put as great a distance between us as he could, and left me holding the bag.

I had been going with Lou over two years and had never had reason to suppose him anything but a gentleman. Now I don't know how I feel toward him. Sometimes I think I hate him, and at other times I'd give almost anything to see him again.

In one way, Joan, I am a bit luckier than you. I have a mother living who is a wonderful pal, and she seems to understand the temptations we girls have to face to-day. She's standing by me through thick and thin.

I also have an aunt who had to be married to save her name, and *she* cuts me absolutely dead. It makes me laugh to see how many people there are in this world who have sinned but are still willing to cast the first stone.

I only hope, Joan, you will have good luck in the future, and especially in the next few months. I would advise you to go to the nearest Salvation Army barracks, and they will gladly help you. That is where I would go if it weren't for mother.

Now, Mrs. Brown, I'd like to say a word to these girls who run around with married men.

Girls, it isn't worth it. Sooner or later you're going to get caught. Think how you'd feel if you were married and the man you had given your life to was running around with an empty-headed little snip.

That is all a girl is who will run around with a married man. I know, for I did it. And see what I am going through now.

His wife left him, and he promised to marry me. His divorce has been granted over a year, but he is in New York now, and I haven't seen or heard from him for over a month.

Now his wife is eating her heart out for him. A second girl committed suicide last month. And here am I, my life ruined, my mother's heart breaking. Just see what damage this smooth scoundrel has done—one

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woman's health gone, another dead, and a third disgraced.

Girls, a married man who will go out with any woman other than his wife will not confine himself to one other woman. Please, girls, give up the idea that these married sheiks are better than the single men; they're only more dangerous.

A Girl that Men Forget.

No one who has the slightest conception of the nature of plants would attempt to grow a rosebush from a potato plant; but so many of us throw our judgment to the winds and try to grow real happiness from the seeds of sorrow. It's one of the things nature will not do, and no amount of hoping can change the inevitable disaster which follows such an attempt.

Dear Mrs. Brown: May I say a few words to Ohio?

No, Ohio, I don't think you are too young to have beaus. And I'm sure you would pick the right kind, if you were allowed to.

It isn't the girl who gets to go places and see what this world is like who gets in wrong. It is the girl who is kept in and doesn't get a chance to come in contact with the good and the bad and learn to tell them apart who falls.

I just wish my mother could talk with yours. I'll bet she would understand when mother got through.

I can also prove the statement I made.

My aunt thinks the same as your mother. My mother is more of a chum to me.

My cousin was nineteen before she was even allowed to have a boy to the house, and when she did get loose it was just too bad. After everything had quieted down about my cousin, mother told my aunt it was her fault, and she finally came to the conclusion it was. Now she has a daughter nearly seventeen, and she is bringing this one up differently. Happy Dot.

And why shouldn't you be happy, you lucky girl? I wish your mother could talk to a good many other foolish mothers I know.

Dear Mrs. Brown: This is not my own problem, but, nevertheless, I am going to lay it before you for your advice. I have two girl friends whom I'll call Elsie and Alice. The three of us have been pals since early childhood. Wherever you found one, you were sure to find the other two near by.

We are all married now, but Alice and her husband are separated. For the past two or three months she has spent most of her time with Elsie and her husband, whom I shall call Harry.

When I first heard rumors that Alice was being seen with Harry while Elsie was at work, I discarded them as falsehoods started by busybodies seeking to make trouble. But now, Mrs. Brown, I know for an honest fact that Alice is going with Harry behind Elsie's back. And the worst part is that Elsie will be the last one to suspect anything. It is absolutely pitiful how she trusts them. She fairly worships Harry, and she loves Alice as a sist.

Oh, Mrs. Brown, how can any one be so deceitful as to double-cross a friend who loves her dearly? Harry is not working at present, so Elsie is paying his way, even buying his cigarettes. But is he satisfied? No! Ever since his affair started with Alice he has been so disagreeable to Elsie I don't see how she can live with him one day longer. There's an old saying, "Love is blind," and it certainly proves true in this case, doesn't it?

I would have bet half my life on Alice, but she has proved almost worthless as a friend. I didn't want to believe this about her, but it has been proved to me in more ways than one.

Mrs. Brown, won't you please print this so that Alice may read it and realize the havoc she is creating in two young lives? She reads this magazine, and I know she will see it. Then maybe she will still have enough backbone left to stop things where they are and prevent another matrimonial ship from going on the rocks. That would break Elsie's heart.

If I were not a friend to Elsie, maybe I could tell her about Alice and Harry. But as it is, I am afraid she will connect me with the message, and I will lose my two best friends instead of just the one who has proved cheap and worthless. Mrs. Brown, I sincerely hope you will print this letter with your views of the subject, so that the catastrophe which is in sight may be avoided. Disgusted with One I Loved.

But why can't you speak to Alice, my dear, instead of to Elsie? As an old friend it wouldn't be out of place for you to warn her that gossip is coupling her name with Harry's. If you can make your manner show that you

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are confident the last thing she would want to do would be to hurt Elsie and Harry, perhaps you can shame her into leaving them alone, without antagonizing her by the knowledge that you're judging and condemning her.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I couldn't possibly let Yankee Kate's letter go by without trying to help her. I do not think she should have dates with any one unless she lets her mother know. If the gob—or any boy, for that matter—is not nice enough to meet her mother, he is not nice enough to have dates on the sly with.

But why should mothers object to a gob? My only child, a boy of nineteen, is in the navy, and he is a boy that any mother could be proud of. He had loads of friends and five best recommendations when he enlisted.

Why did he go? Because he wanted to see the country; it's the life he wanted to lead.

We drove to Newport in July to see our gob. But, Yankee Kate, while we were there I saw some gobs whom I wouldn't want a daughter of mine to be seen with, in the condition in which I saw them. So there is good and bad in the navy, the same as there is everywhere else.

If my son were going with a girl, he would insist on meeting her parents. And just because he is a gob that is no reason he should be objected to by mothers. We live in a college town, have a nice six-room house, two cars, and a good business. We have a radio, a piano, a victrola, and everything you'd want to make you happy, loads of friends included. But I am glad I let my son choose to do as he wanted. If America should have trouble with another nation and our gobs had to protect us with their lives, I think some of those mothers would not object to a nice boy just because he is in uniform.

ONE GOB'S BEST FRIEND.

You've struck the nail square on the head, One Gob's Best Friend. In uniform or out, it is the man you must judge, and not the cut of his coat. The woman who lets herself be swayed by purely superficial considerations, instead of looking below the surface, is certain to come to grief some day.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Please, may I say a word in reference to Yankee Kate's letter? It makes me as mad as hops to hear people belittle the gobs just because a few would-be wise guys have no respect for the uniform they are wearing.

I lived in a seaport on the West coast for several years. My folks didn't like the idea of having me go with gobs, but I brought them home with me just the same. I met them at parties and at church events, and I'd let them bring me home.

My folks had too much decency to insult them, so they had to accept them.

Yankee Kate, you go with this gob. If he is a real gob, he will treat you right, and you'll never be sorry. Don't listen to people who judge the whole navy by a few hobos who join up to get out of hard work.

Gobs are all right, Yankee Kate; I know, because I've been married to one for three years and we're supremely happy.

A NAVY WIFE.

Here's some more evidence which is pretty convincing. A Navy Wife should know what she is talking about.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I would like to say a few words to Party Girl.

Oh, my dear, there is so much that is fine and beautiful in this world; if you only try you will find it. I did, although it was a cruel road.

Two years ago, I fell in love with a very sweet boy. We went together for a year, had all our plans made and the wedding date set when my castles all came tumbling down.

He chose a big party as a suitable time to tell me he was married and had a baby. He begged me to wait until he got his final papers, but I knew his place was with his wife and baby.

I had my own car, and I drove like mad going home to get away from the pain in my heart. (Suddenly a car turned out in front of me. There was only one thing to do; I drove into a stone wall. My car overturned; Dee, my dearest friend, was killed, and I was caught underneath.

I was in the hospital for many months, bitter and heartsick, till Jack's wife came to see me. Jack had told her everything, and when she kissed me and called me her sweetest friend, I thanked Heaven I had sent him back to her.

I am home now, but it is so hard to go on, knowing I was to blame for Dee's death. If it weren't for the chance I have to balance the books, I doubt if I could find the courage. There are three young girls here with me. They are out of work and have no

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homes, but mother and I are trying to make one for them. As soon as they are rested, dad will put them to work. They are very modern, but so clean, fine, and sweet I love them all.

I am only twenty-two, and sometimes it's hard to think that perhaps I'll never walk again. But I don't linger long on those thoughts, for I have my girls.

There is happiness for all who try to find it. We can't lie down and quit because of one setback. Your experience should make you a finer woman. I am betting on you, dear. JILL.

Your mistakes need not mean the death of all your hopes for happiness, Party Girl. If you have the courage to start all over again, you can use your failures as stepping stones to success. You have your chance now to prove what stuff you're made of. It isn't half so hard to go on being good all your life as it is to turn your back on the wrong path, once you've strayed, and to begin the hard climb to self-respect.

It won't be easy, but it can be done. If you give up without even trying, it seems conclusive proof that you weren't worth saving in the first place.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am going to tell Party Girl the story of my life, although I had promised never to tell any one. Maybe, though, it will help Party Girl to find herself as I did.

When I was just fifteen I married a man who wasn't any good. My people were always good to me, and the only reason I married him was because I didn't want to hurt my mother. I felt so ashamed for what I had done that I would have done anything in the world to keep my mother's faith.

Well, to make a long story short, I went through torments whose extent only Heaven and I know. I stood it for two years to save my pride. But God was good to me; I didn't have any children.

After I left him, I didn't trust any man farther than I could see him. But I drank, smoked, and let myself go, trying to forget.

I left home so my mother would never know, and then one day I looked back at my past and tried to see where it was all leading to. From that day on, I found myself. I went with nice boys and girls. I was working for some wonderful people who treated me as if I were their own child, and they helped me come back.

The lady I was working for was the means of my meeting my present husband. I told him later that I didn't trust any man alive.

I found out, though, that there is good in some men, and when he asked me to marry him I didn't know what to do. So I told him a part of my life, and he guessed the rest. Don't think I wasn't ashamed, but I couldn't go to him thinking that some day he might find out and hate me.

Party Girl, my husband is young, too, and he understood. Why not give this boy a chance?

You say liquor dulls your pain. You know as well as I that the effect only lasts for a few hours, and it only makes you feel worse afterward. Wake up to yourself, dear; don't let it beat you.

You were right when you said we pay. I can never have any children of my own now, but we are planning on taking some homeless baby to fill the place our own can never have.

Cheer up, dear; there is always a light, even in the darkest hours of our life. Have courage and try to find that light. I am sure you will if you try hard enough. I will pray that you will find happiness, as I have.

Mrs. Brown, I have been married a year now, and it is really all the happiness I have ever had in my life. I would never have said a word of my past, but I hope to help Party Girl a little. I am a true wife to my husband and one of the lucky ones who are happy. SAFE AT LAST.

Thank you, Safe at Last. I know it wasn't easy to write that letter. And this is just what Party Girl needs to show her that a comeback can be successful.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I met and married a young soldier boy during the World War. He was only twenty years old, and I was seventeen.

When the War broke out he was studying medicine. He gave up his schoolwork and enlisted in the medical corps. Jack was a very handsome boy, and I certainly loved him dearly.

We were happy for a while, and then he was ordered overseas. I went back to my old home. Those were long, lonely days until he came home. While he was away our baby boy was born, and when Jack came

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home there were three of us to settle down in our cozy home in another State. There Jack resumed his medical studies.

Once again life was all sunshine. But, alas, my husband began to run around with a wild set. Dances, road houses, and too much booze took their toll. His life became one wild night.

I went through far lonelier hours then than those I spent while he was Over There. I could not go with him because I would not neglect our baby. Finally he became involved in a scandal which ended in our separation. I came back to my people, a lonely, disillusioned girl.

Years have gone by. I've worked hard and raised our boy. I have had some very nice men friends, many chances to marry again. But, Mrs. Brown, I have drunk too deeply of the bitter cup of disappointment. I have never loved any one else.

This summer I visited a dear girl friend in Virginia. While I was there the American Legion post of that town gave a dance. My friend's husband took us both, and there I met Jack again—an older Jack, but still the Jack I loved.

I had not known where he was, as I would never accept any money from him for Jackie's support. He rushed me all evening. It was so conspicuous I was compelled to tell my friend who he was. He begged to let him see his son. He called me on the phone every hour of the day, from the hospital, from his office, from his patients' homes, and he drove by the house as often as he could. He begged me to forgive him, to let him see Jackie.

My friends also begged me to let him see our boy. When he came, he caught the child up close in his arms and cried. So did I.

He wants to marry me again, but shall I do it? I'm so afraid. I feel as if I couldn't go through again what I've been through in these past eleven years. He knows I doubt him. Just when I'd learned to forget him to a certain extent, he had to come back into my life!

He is a fine man now, doesn't drink or keep bad company. He is one of the finest doctors in that little city. I realize Jackie Boy needs him now more than ever before.

He is so jealous of me; doesn't want me to have any dates with other men. He has come to see me twice since my return home, and he writes me every day.

He is coming to a medical convention here in a month or so, and he wants to marry me while he is here. My people are opposed to it, as are many of my friends, so, please, I would like to have you and your readers give me your opinion. We are still young, and probably have many years ahead of us to enjoy life. I'm sure I'll never love any one else.

While visiting there, I went to Jack's office after a show one evening. There I saw a picture of myself and Jackie in the private office. I wonder if he loved us all through those long, long, lonesome years as I did him. But, Mrs. Brown, that doubtful feeling I have—if only I could mend that scar across my poor broken heart!

A War Bride.

Isn't it pathetic to see a woman get so used to wretchedness she fears to reach out and grasp the happiness which is offered her? You'll be making a mistake if you let fear dictate your decision, War Bride. It is a fear based on experience, it's true, but the conditions are so changed you can't compare the future with the past.

When the trouble arose, Jack was little more than a boy. What's more, he was a boy who had passed one of the most important years of his life under a terrific strain, a strain which we who did not experience it ourselves cannot even imagine. It is not surprising if something cracked under the horrible conditions he had just been compelled to pass through.

If he had come home without a leg, if he had come home blind, you would have been all sympathy and understanding. But his wound was an invisible one, a searing of spirit under sights which no man was made to bear. And you failed him then. It wasn't your fault any more than it was his. Neither of you knew what was happening. But between you, you brought about this eleven-year period of grief and loneliness.

Now it is all changed. Jack has gotten over the shock; he has taken his place as a man of substance and responsibility in the community. Do the ten years of fine, clean living mean nothing to you, War Bride? Doesn't that show you that his year of madness is over,

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that he's ready for the ties he threw aside?

You are both older now, both better fitted for marriage and the adjustments marriage means. And as you say, Jackie Boy needs his father more than ever now. Who will make a better father than the man who has learned what bitter loneliness freedom can mean? Who will make a better guide than the man who has passed through the fires of temptation and learned how tasteless is forbidden fruit?

Forget the past and look ahead to happiness, War Bride. As our youngsters so often remind us, "The war's over!"

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I say a few words to Birdie? I want to tell her what a fool she is.

This thing you call a boy friend is scum. He cannot be classed as a man, for no true man would let his faith keep him from undoing the wrong he has done.

In the sight of God this thing is a snake. I don't care what his religion may be.

Birdie, for goodness' sake, open your eyes. You just couldn't love this person. Knowing his past is enough to prove his future.

Your mother is absolutely right, and so is Mrs. Brown. I don't see why you ask advice when the solution is so plain. Just think of his little girl, without a name! Think of her future! And then tell him to take his religion and go hang.

There are plenty of real, honest-to-goodness men on this earth, and I'm sure you will find the right one some day. I didn't find the right one at first; but, thank heavens, I waited until he came along. We are starting our twelfth year of happiness this week, with a ten-year-old son who is our pride and joy.

I know what my husband would say to a person of this kind if he ever met up with him, but it's much too hot to put on paper.

ABSOLUTELY SURE.

I don't think anything could be too hot for that sort of scoundrel.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am very much interested in Provoked's case, because it is somewhat similar to mine.

I think any woman who will take another woman's unwanted child deserves just such a crown of glory as the world seems to reserve only for real mothers.

A real mother, it is true, goes down into the Valley of Death for her children, but don't adopted or stepmothers suffer a thousand living deaths when reminded they are not the real mothers?

They do if they care anything about the children.

I think Provoked should go to a lawyer and find out just what can be done about this before it is too late.

In my case, I was a young widow, and I married a widower with three children—one girl and two boys. In the four and one half years we have been married I have grown to love these children as my own.

Their grandmother on their father's side, however, doesn't wish them to call me "mother." But what else am I? I take the place of the one who left with another man at a time the girl, six years old, was in the hospital with a broken leg and diphtheria.

Now I ask you, is that a real mother?

QUESTIONED.

I agree with you, Questioned. The mere fact that this other woman brought the children into the world gives her no claim on them if she won't do her part in caring for them. But I can't understand what all the shouting is about.

What's in a name? It's the feeling the children have for you which counts, not what they call you with their lips.

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

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79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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At last comes the most practical training method in fiction writing. Its very simplicity will make you wonder why it has never been thought of before. Yet the advantages and benefits it presents are so unusual that you will be eager to accept this opportunity.

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Please send me your free prospectus, "Writing for the Billion-Word Market," in which is explained your home-instruction method of training authors to write for the popular fiction magazines. Also include free aptitude test.

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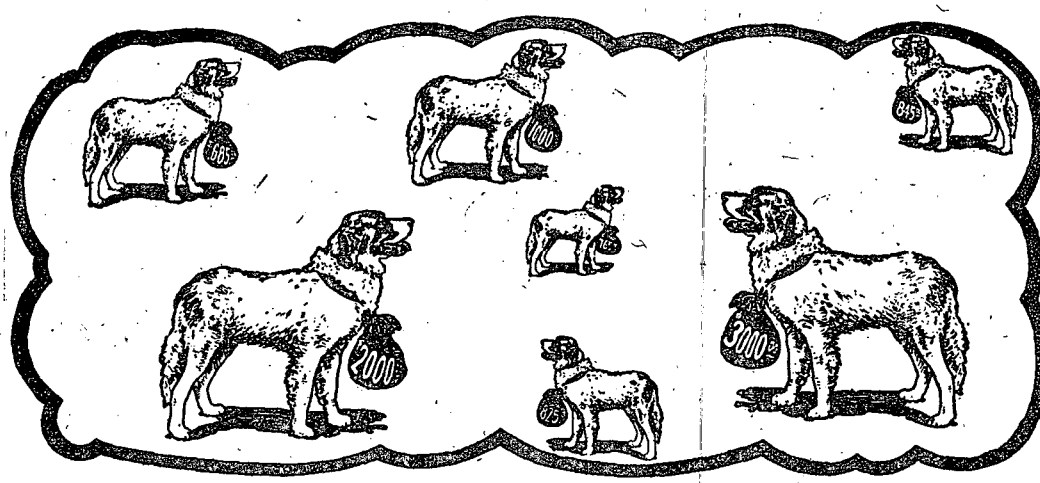

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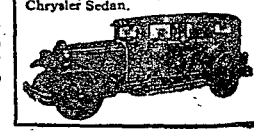
Someone Who Answers My Announcement wins $2000.00 Chrysler Sedan, and by qualifying promptly, gets $1000.00 cash extra, or $3000.00 ALL CASH.

Draw 3 straight lines—put each dog in yard by itself

Seven St. Bernard dogs are carrying huge bags of money. Each dog must be in a yard by itself. Can you do this by drawing three straight lines? If successful mail your answer at once. I'll qualify you for big opportunity. You may be the one to win $3000.00, or $2000.00 Chrysler Sedan and $1000.00 additional. Duplicate prizes in case of ties. No matter who you are or where you live, IF YOU WANT TO WIN THE $3000.00 PRIZE SEND YOUR ANSWER TODAY for full information. Send no money. RUSH YOUR ANSWER BY FIRST MAIL.

$1000.00 cash extra for promptness. Winner can get Cash and Chrysler Sedan.



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Strange Fluid Charges Batteries *Instantly*

A simple, harmless fluid which automatically recharges automobile, radio and other wet batteries instantly, is being offered on trial to users by Harry Elliott, Suite 1266, Eighth & Park Sts., Des Moines, Iowa. This remarkable fluid also increases the life of batteries and enables them to hold their charge indefinitely. Dead batteries charge themselves as if by magic. Old batteries act like new. No trouble—no battery expense—can be used instantly by anyone. Mr. Elliott wants agents and is making a free offer. Write him today.

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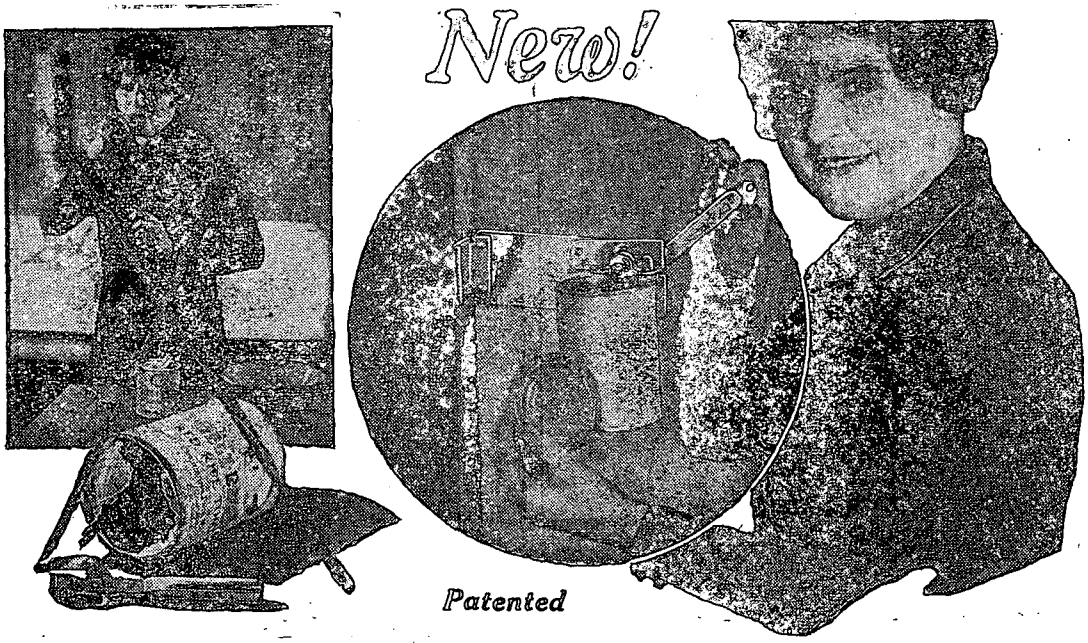

Just A Twist Of The Wrist

Banishes Old-Style Can Openers to the Scrap Heap and BRINGS AGENTS UP TO $6 AND $8 IN AN HOUR!

WOMEN universally detest the old-style can opener. Yet in every home in the land cans are being opened with it, often several times a day. Imagine how thankfully they welcome this new method—this automatic way of doing their most distasteful job. With the Speedo can opening machine you can just put the can in the machine, turn the handle, and almost instantly the job is done.

End This Waste and Danger

You undoubtedly know what a nasty, dangerous job it is to open cans with the old-fashioned can opener. You have to hack your way along slowly—ripping a jagged furrow around the edge. Next thing you know, the can opener slips. Good night! You've torn a hole in your finger. As liable as not it will get infected and stay sore a long time. Perhaps even your life will be endangered from blood poisoning!

You may be lucky enough to get the can open without cutting yourself. But there's still the fact to consider that the ragged edge of tin left around the top makes it almost impossible to pour out all of the food. Yet now, all this trouble, waste and danger is ended. No wonder salesmen everywhere are finding this invention a truly revolutionary money maker!

A "Million Dollar" Can Opening Machine

The Speedo holds the can—opens it—flips up the lid so you can grab it—and gives you back the can without a drop spilled, without any rough edges to snag your fingers—all in a couple of seconds! It's so easy even a 10-year-old child can do it in perfect safety! No wonder women—and men, too—simply go wild over it! No wonder Speedo salesmen have sold to every house in the block and have made up to $8 in an hour.

AGENTS!

Full Time $265 in a Week

"Here is my record for first 30 days with Speedo: June 13, 60 Speedos; June 20, 84 Speedos; June 30, 192 Speedos; July 6, 288 Speedos. I made $265 in a week." M. Ornoff, Va.

SPARE TIME $9 First Half Day

"The first afternoon I received my Speedo outfit I made $9." Mrs. R. Spain, Kas.

PART TIME $20 in 3 Hours

"I worked about three hours and took 25 orders. This brought me $20 profit." O. C. Gregg, Wyo.

Generous Free Test Offer

Frankly, men, I realize that the profit possibilities of this proposition as outlined briefly here may seem almost incredible to you. So I've worked out a plan by which you can examine the invention and test its profits without risking one penny.

Get my free test offer while the territory you want is still open—I'll hold it for you while you make the test. I'll send you all the facts about salesmen making up to $100 and even more in a week. I'll also tell you about another fast selling item that brings you two profits. All you risk is a 2c stamp—so grab your pencil and shoot me the coupon right now.

CENTRAL STATES MFG. CO., Dept. B-2564
4500 Mary Ave. (Est. over 20 years) St. Louis, Mo.

SPEEDO

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St. Louis, Mo.

Rush me your FREE TEST OFFER.

Name .....

Address .....

City .....State .....

☐ Check here if interested only in one for your home.

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MOULDING A MIGHTY ARM

Get a 17 Inch Bicep

Complete Course on Arm Building

ONLY 25c

Get an arm of might with the power and grip to obey your physical desires. You can now build your arm from a scrawny piece of skin and bone to one of huge muscular size. I don't mean just a 17-inch bicep but a 15-inch forearm and an 8-inch wrist. This specially prepared course will build every muscle in the arm because it has been scientifically worked out for that purpose. You can develop a pair of triceps shaped like a horseshoe and just as strong, and a pair of biceps that will show their double head formation. The sinewy cables between the biceps and elbow will be deep and thick with wire cable ligaments. In that arm of yours, the forearm will belly with bulk, and the great supinator lifting muscle you can make into a column of power, while your wrist will grow alive and writhe with cordy sinew. All this you can get for 25 cents—send for this course today and you can have a he-man's arm built to be as beautiful, brawny and magnificent as the village blacksmith's.

You can't make a mistake. The guarantee of the strongest armed man in the world stands behind this course. I give you the secrets of strength illustrated and explained as you like it. Build for yourself an unbreakable grip of steel and a Herculean arm. Mail your order now while you can still get this course at my introductory price of only 25c.

RUSH THE COUPON TODAY

To each purchaser will be given a FREE COPY of *THE THRILL OF BEING STRONG.* It is a priceless book to the strength fan and muscle builder. Full of pictures of marvelous bodied men who tell you decisively how you can build symmetry and strength the equal of theirs.

REACH OUT—GRASP THIS SPECIAL OFFER

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Hearts of the Big Top

By ELLEN HOGUE

HE could ride, this Tom Jenison, this rather pallid, hollow-eyed nonentity in circus business, canvas slapper, man of mystery. That lean, long body was fluid as the liquid lightning it bestrode, reared and leaped with the lightning, thought with the brain of it and always one split second ahead of the murderous brute mind."

The story of how Jenison rode the wicked stallion Killer Boy, while the girl he loved looked on with agony in her beautiful eyes, is the smashing climax of a novel of circus life which keeps you as much on edge as that great riding kept its spectators breathless.

Under the Big Top of the circus, a fantastic world—"world of the ballyhoo, the shillaber; of hot dogs and popcorn and water-thin lemonade; of horseflesh and grease paint, of glitter and pomp; elephants that served a king in India; a mangy lion born in the Bronx zoo; stray dogs, stray boys, wives, sweethearts, bad men, good men, weak men, brave men, beggar men, thieves."

Such is the world which Milly the daughter of the circus and the heroine of this colorful novel adorned and reigned over. Ellen Hogue knows it so intimately and loves it so well that she makes it come to vibrant life before your eyes. Read "Hearts of the Big Top" if you want thrills in your fiction, thrills mingled with a most touching love story.

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"I know you think I am the most ungrateful woman in the world for not writing you before this and letting you know how I am getting along after taking your wonderful Steriltone. It has worked wonders with me as my dreams will soon come true and I will be a mother next month. I have had such a wonderful time getting everything ready and there has not been very much room for anything else. I am under our doctor's care and he says he can't see why I should not have a very easy time as my health is in the best of order . . . Steriltone is wonderful for those who want a baby in their home. My husband and I can hardly wait for the time to come."—Mrs. Wm. E. T., Ill.

"I had full benefit of my first treatment. I now feel fine and am a mother. I have a fine little girl now 17 months old."—Mrs. J. L. M., Iowa.

"I was troubled with a very severe female weakness accompanied by some very unpleasant symptoms and with pains in my back, sides and legs. Since taking your wonderful Steriltone I am better in every way and the unpleasant symptoms have disappeared. Your medicine is wonderful for nervous, run-down women."—Mrs. I. W., Mich.

"Before I took your medicine I dragged around feeling so weak I could hardly move. I have tried many things but your medicine is the best thing I have ever tried and I think of you every time I look at my fine baby boy. He will be 6 months old the 10th of January, weighs 22 pounds. I wish you could see him; he seems to be so well and happy. My former Doctor told me I would never have another baby and then I saw your ad in a paper and wrote you."—Mrs. L. R. R., Ala.

"I don't know when I have felt as well or as stout as I have been for the past two months. Last month I never had a pain of any kind; did not know it was near my time until I came sick and I felt so good. I know your medicine has done wonders for me."
—Mrs. P. L. R., Okla.

"Just a few lines to let you hear from me. No doubt you thought that I did not intend to let you know about your famous STERILTONE. Well, Doctor, I wanted to wait to see results. Last month was the only time in all my life that I enjoyed a painless period. So now I am quite convinced that your Steriltone is all that you say it is."
—Mrs. E. H., Ga.

I Want 10,000 Married Women Who Will Accept a Treatment FREE

I want every woman who is sick, run-down, or who has been denied the blessing of motherhood on account of sterility due to functional weakness to know about this splendid treatment. If you will send me your name and address I'll gladly send you a treatment and a copy of my booklet, "A Baby in Your Home," which tells how to use it and many other things every married woman should know. Both will be sent free in plain wrapper. Just use the coupon or write me personally. All letters are held in strictest confidence. Don't put this off, as here may be the one means by which your outlook on life may be crowned with happiness.

DR. H. WILL ELDERS
Suite 340-B, Schneider Bldg.
St. Joseph - - Missouri

Mail COUPON Now!

Dr. H. WILL ELDERS, Suite 340-B
Schneider Bldg., St. Joseph, Mo.

Dear Doctor: Please send me your treatment and booklet in plain wrapper. Both are to be free.

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... *State* .....

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$1000.00
In Rewards!
STREET & SMITH'S
Detective Story Magazine
Is Conducting a Contest With Prizes Ranging from
$500.00 down to $10.00

The Contest has to do with The Shadow! Hundreds of Thousands have heard The Shadow. Shivers course up and down their spines when he announces Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine radio program every Thursday evening (9:30 p. m. Eastern Standard Time) over the Columbia Broadcasting Network. But what does The Shadow really look like, and what type of man is he?

Commencing with the February 7th issue of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine—on the stands January 30th—different hints will be given by The Shadow, which will be clews as to what The Shadow really looks like. These different hints, which will be given for ten weeks in all, will be printed in Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, in the magazines *dated* February 7, 1931, to April 11, 1931, inclusive. The same hints will be given by The Shadow over the radio.

Contestants in the Ten-week Contest, offered by Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, will be given two weeks from the date of printing the last clews in the issue of April 11, 1931, to write out their descriptions of The Shadow and mail them to Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. These clews will aid contestants in forming their ideas as to what The Shadow really looks like.

Descriptions must reach Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., before midnight, April 25, 1931.

Descriptions must not contain more than one hundred words. These descriptions will be judged by the degree of ingenuity displayed by contestants in coming to their conclusions as to what The Shadow really looks like; for the clarity and conciseness which they show in coming to their conclusions; and for the neatness and general appearance of their manuscripts.

The judges will be the Honorable Joseph Corrigan, Chief Magistrate of New York City; Edgar Wallace, celebrated detective-story writer; John J. Sullivan, Assistant Chief Inspector in Charge of Detectives, New York Police Department, and W. Sherman Burns, of the Burns Detective Agency.

FOR FULL PARTICULARS SEE STREET & SMITH'S DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

Copies of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine can be purchased on the news stands for 15 cents a copy, be obtained from the office of the magazine at 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., by mail at fifteen cents a copy, or if any may not wish to purchase copies, they can be examined at most public libraries or at the office of Street & Smith's Detective Story Magazine, free of charge.

STREET & SMITH'S
Detective Story Magazine

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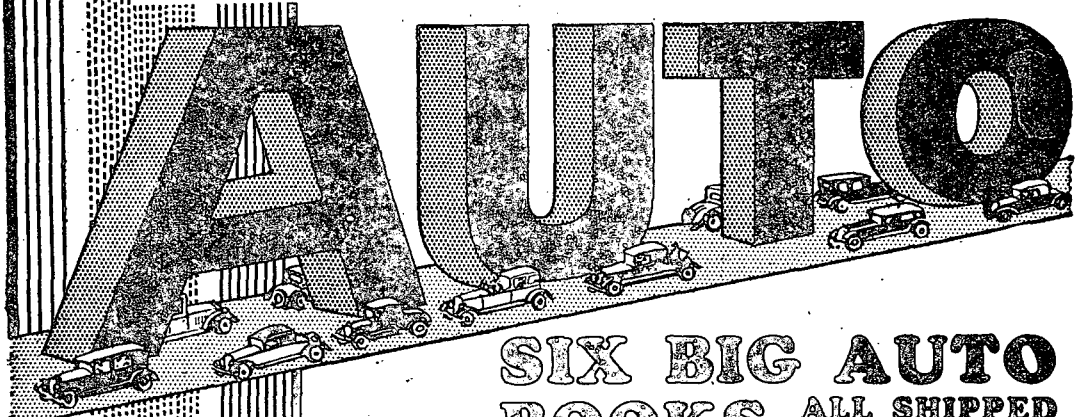
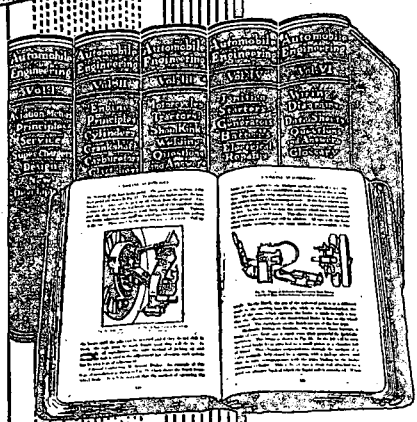


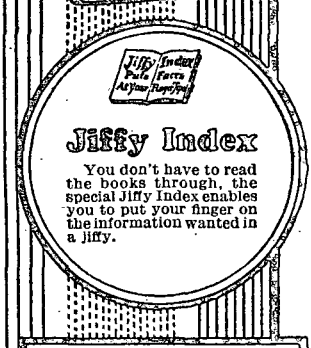
SIX BIG AUTO BOOKS ALL SHIPPED FREE

on approval; whether you want to qualify as garage owner, auto repair expert or merely wish to know how to keep your own car 100% efficient, look at these books—they are sent to you for free examination. This brand new 1931 edition has been prepared by a large group of America's greatest automotive engineers. Anybody who can read will understand them, for this great automobile encyclopedia is a veritable gold mine of valuable facts. Take advantage of this great opportunity now; send in the coupon for FREE examination. You don't pay us a penny, you don't obligate yourself to pay anything unless you decide to keep the books. Just tell us you want to see them and the full set of 6 great volumes, just off the press, will be sent to you. Read them, look them over and prove to your own satisfaction that one fact alone, which you will find in them, may save you an expensive repair, or help you to a better job.

AVIATION MOTORS

In addition to being a complete cyclopedia of automobile engineering these books contain over 100 pages on Aviation Motors, and as they are just off the press they bring to you the newest and latest information obtainable. This alone makes these books *invaluable* to anyone.

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These books will be sent free immediately upon receipt of coupon with writer's name and address and that of his employer or other business man as a reference.

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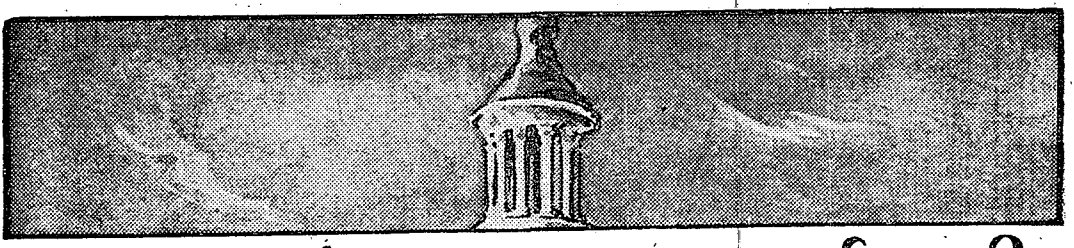
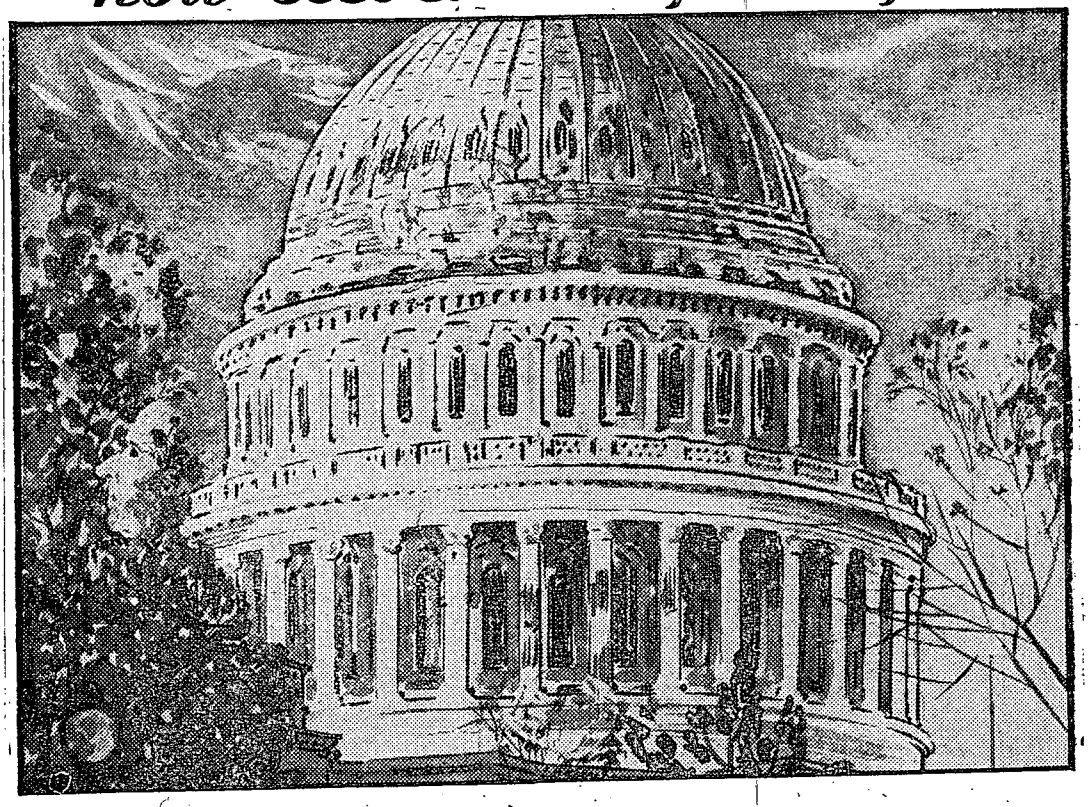


—how clever are your Eyes?



QUALIFY . . . for PRIZES of $12,500.00

LOOK sharp! Dim visions of six of our greatest presidents are carefully hidden in this picture. CAN YOU FIND THREE OR MORE OF THEM? They are so vague as to be actually lost to the sight of all but the sharpest and cleverest eyes. As a test of your eligibility to win the highest prize of three thousand six hundred dollars, we ask that you find at least three of them. There is no other cost but a little time and postage. To see them, it may be necessary for you to turn this picture upside down or sideways, so scrutinize it closely from every possible angle. They may be on the dome of the capitol itself, in the clouds, lurking near the pillars, among the trees, or most anywhere. We want to find out if you are sincerely interested in our product. This twelve thousand five hundred dollars worth of prizes will be given and every one of the fifteen big prize winners will receive a beautiful new automobile or its full value in cash. The smallest prize you can win is $495.00 and the largest $3,600.00. On simple evidence of promptness, the first prize winner will receive $2,000.00 cash as an extra reward just for being quick! Think of that. Now look sharp! Can you see at least three visions of the hidden presidents? If your eyes are clever enough to find three or more of them, cut out only the faces and send to me with your name and address. Someone who has sharp, clever eyes to qualify and is quick, can win three thousand six hundred dollars. It might as well be you. If you pass this test, are quick and make the prize winning standing, this offer will bring you a prize of three thousand six hundred dollars in cash. Duplicate prizes will be paid in case of ties. Answers can be accepted only from persons living in the U. S. A. outside of Chicago.

F. LANGE, Free Prize Director,
Dept. 26 37 W. Van Buren Street, Chicago, Ill.

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Turning on water faucets *pours Money into your hands*

Why drink dirty, germ laden water?

Here, at last, is an amazing water filter that attaches to the faucet and removes instantly the germ laden dirt from drinking water. Housewives everywhere want this Filter the minute they see it. It is a health protection that is needed and should be in every home.

Scientists have proven that water filtration prevents such diseases as Erysipelas, Septicaemia and Diarrhea and actually lowers the death rate from Typhoid Fever. It is a proven fact that in many communities the water that comes from the drinking faucet is laden with disease germs.

Why continue to take chances with disease and death—why be subjected to danger and possible sickness by drinking raw, unfiltered water?

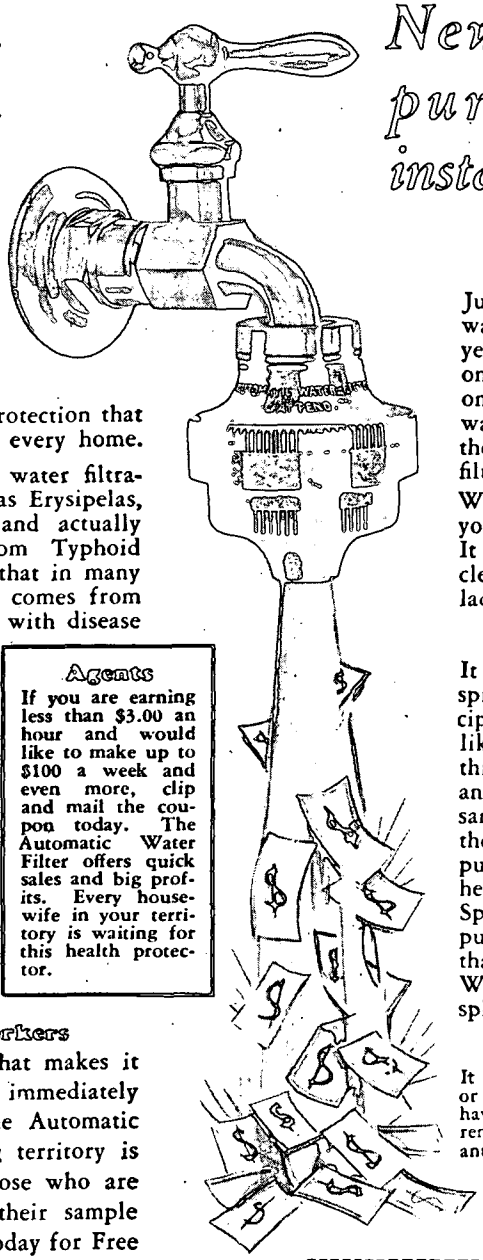
Dirty drinking water is a thing of the past the minute an Automatic Water Filter is installed Saves buying expensive spring water. Now clear, clean water is within the reach of all.

Agents

If you are earning less than $3.00 an hour and would like to make up to $100 a week and even more, clip and mail the coupon today. The Automatic Water Filter offers quick sales and big profits. Every housewife in your territory is waiting for this health protector.

Sample Free to Workers

We have arranged a plan that makes it possible for agents to start immediately making big money with the Automatic Water Filter. Good paying territory is open. Our plan enables those who are really interested to obtain their sample or nothing. Mail coupon today for Free Offer Plan



New invention purifies water instantly ... at the faucet!

Just imagine a device that purifies water instantly at the faucet and yet can be attached in a few seconds! Think of it— You can put on an Automatic Filter, let the water run for ten minutes, remove the filter and find enough dirt and filth to fill the bottom of a glass. When you see what this Filter does you will not want to be without it. It delivers pure, sparkling water, clear as crystal and free from germ laden filth.

FILTERS LIKE NATURE

It is just like bringing a bubbling spring into your kitchen. The principle of the Automatic Filter is just like nature. It forces the water thru crystal silica sand. The dirt and germs cannot pass thru the sand so the water that comes out of the faucet is clean, free from impurities, pleasing to the taste, and healthful to the body. Crystal Spring Water could be no more pure or healthful than the water that comes out of the Automatic Water Filter. It also prevents splashing.

Guarantee

It makes no difference where you live, or what kind of drinking water you have, the Automatic Water Filter will remove dirt and filth from it. We guarantee it to purify water, remove dirt and filth, protect against contamination and deliver pure crystal clear, sparkling water, or the trial costs you nothing.

AUTOMATIC WATER FILTER CO.
MILWAUKEE WISCONSIN

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

Automatic Water Filter Co.,
Dept. 118, 2621 N 3rd St., Milwaukee, Wisc

Gentlemen:—You may send me full particulars of your free offer and big money-making proposition

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

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Grouchy Mornings

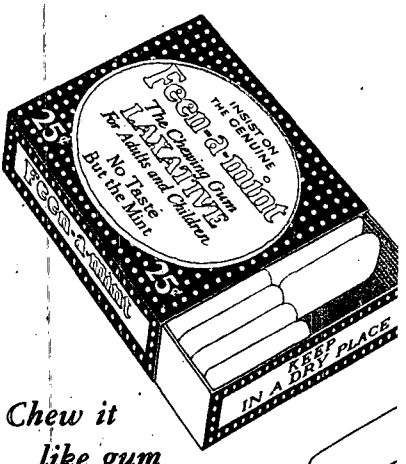
Feen-a-mint is effective in milder doses because it work on the new principle of uni form internal distribution. I is thorough, gentle, depend able. Safe for young and old

Grouchy mornings! Out of sorts! Everyone knows how easy it is to get cross as a bear over almost nothing. Yet how unnecessary it is to allow intestinal sluggishness to ruin our entire day, to make us less agreeable, less efficient.

For constipation can be corrected so safely, so surely, so easily through the use of Feen-a-mint, the modern chewing gum laxative.

As you chew this delicious bit of gum, the tasteless laxative it contains is gradually released and mixed with the saliva. Thus it is carried to the intestinal tract smoothly, evenly, without shock to the system or the distressing after effects so common with old-fashioned laxatives. Each particle of the laxative in Feen-a-mint works with utmost efficiency, gently encouraging the intestinal muscles to resume the activity so necessary for healthful elimination.

Get a package at your druggist's today and learn how *well* you can feel when intestinal poisons are cleared out of your system.



Chew it like gum

Feen-a-mint

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